

Preparing for a Life in Sports: Personal Experience and Progression as an Amateur Sports Journalist

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Abstract

The job of a sports journalist is to bridge the gap between teams and their players and the fans. Through this reflection of a sample that I will put in my digital portfolio to further help my representation in the field, I looked at important aspects of sports journalism such as keeping the audience informed, creating detailed profiles of athletes, and actually attending games as part of the media, along with how these three elements create credibility for a sports journalist.

Sports are an integral part of American culture. Each year, sports bring in billions of views. Teams are followed by millions of users across all social media platforms. Television channels like ESPN, FoxSports1, and NFL Network are dedicated to sports for 24 hours a day all year long. Everywhere you turn, sports can be found in many different forms.

With the ever-growing popularity of sports in America, huge sports organizations, worth millions or even billions of dollars with athletes who are almost superhuman, are placed on such a high pedestal that they are almost transcendent. Therein lies the job of the sports journalists taking these otherworldly figures and giving the average fan an in-depth look at these players and teams through an article or an interview, as sports journalists allow for fans to have a better understanding of these teams and

athletes that they can't get from just watching the games.

Though I don't have access to star athletes and professional teams just yet, I have selected a few samples and experiences that I believe show my ability to discover interesting stories and portray them to an audience of sports fans.

Bridging the Gap between Teams and Fans

Bridging the gap between the fans and the teams themselves is the main job of a sports journalist. For the most part, sports are fairly straightforward, but there can be more difficult concepts to grasp about sports when it comes to analyzing players, contracts, or league rules. Becoming an expert in these areas makes the journalist's content important and making them a credible source of information.

A Look at the 2021 Expansion Draft: Who Will the Flyers Protect from Seattle

For my first sample, I created a piece titled “A Look at the 2021 Expansion Draft: Who Will the Flyers Protect from Seattle?”. Though this was created outside of school for the blog “PHLSportsNation”, I took the concept of “knowing your audience” to explain a difficult concept to an audience who may not understand it. For this sample, I explain who the upcoming NHL expansion draft and how it affects the Flyers in particular. In explaining a more advanced concept, I had to research how teams prepare for the expansion draft where one player is taken from every team and can only protect a maximum of 11 players. In this piece, I tried to break it down into sections explaining who the Flyers may protect and how it differs from the NHL Expansion Draft in 2017.

Profiling: Stories directly from the athletes

Another element of “bridging the gap” between teams and fans is getting quotes directly from the players and making them less distant to the audience. Since fans usually don’t have the opportunity to hear the players speak very often, a detailed profile can allow for a “behind the scenes” look at the players.

Disabled Philadelphia veterans get second chance to play hockey with the Flyers Warriors

During my time at Millersville, I was tasked multiple times with finding a profile story that is both interesting and relevant for my writing classes. The first of two profile samples I’ve included in my portfolio is a detailed look at the Flyers Warriors hockey team, a group of partially disabled veterans who all share a love for competition and playing hockey. I was able to connect with two Afghanistan War veterans and Flyers Warriors players to discuss the origins of the team, how the team has helped veterans

adjust to life outside of the service, and their connection with the Philadelphia Flyers. I found this profile to be one that not only informs the audience on who the Flyers Warriors are, but one that can also promote what the Warrior Hockey program has done for veterans across the United States.

Championship Dreams Cut Short: An Interview with Ohio State Hockey Player Ryan Snowden

Another profile I completed was for Dr. Spicer’s Computer-Assisted Journalism class where I was asked to find a story that was relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic which had just begun at the time of the assignment. For this profile, I chose to interview a high school classmate and current Ohio State Buckeyes ice hockey player, Ryan Snowden. Snowden and the Buckeyes had just had their season cancelled during the Big Ten tournament due to the COVID-19 outbreak. In this profile, I was able to find a relevant story to the pandemic in discussing how the pandemic was affecting college athletics on the Division-I level.

Covering games as part of the media

The final and most common aspect of sports journalism is actually attending the games. Each game should be turned into its own story by compiling quotes from coaches and players to give the audience a complete look at the game that fans can’t get from just watching the game. I was able to gain some experience in this area of sports journalism with the blog “Good Night, Good Hockey” where I was able to attend Hershey Bears games at the Giant Center in Hershey, PA. With full media passes, I was able to watch the game in the press box and attend the post-game press conferences with the players and former head coach Troy Mann. With all of this access, I was able to create game recaps which summarized the games and

incorporated quotes which gave fans a full view of the game.

A Future in Sports Journalism

Using the three aspects I've mentioned, keeping the audience informed, creating detailed profiles, and covering games is important as a sports journalist to share your own knowledge and access to teams and

players to the fans. In doing so, a bond is created between the journalist and the audience as the journalist becomes a trusted and credible source for their readers.

With the knowledge and experience I've gained over the last five years, I feel that I have prepared myself for the many tasks of a career in sports journalism, and my time at Millersville has guided me along the way.

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