

## “Be a Sports Journalist” Essay

By Tony Williams

After walking into the Jerome Schottenstein Center, emotions swirled around the arena. The screams from excited fans echoed throughout the building while the familiar squeaking of shoes on the floor murmured below the chants. Once taking my seat in press row, the floor glistened beneath the players and the enormous scoreboard seemed within arm's reach. As the games began, students in the stands adorned unique costumes, constantly waving towels at their opponents and bringing excitement for the teams. Witnessing the action at ground level, the physicality and size of the players gave the arena a college atmosphere. During stoppages in play, the music blared through the loud speakers and I could even feel the arena vibrate while Harvest Prep made a run in the second game. Intensity, pride, passion, and dedication all filled the air and consumed my mind throughout the day.

Aside from the atmosphere of the arena, my interactions with sports journalists allowed me to discover more about this career field in a first hand setting. While watching the games, I witnessed the reporters diligently taking notes during the action and searching for the creative lead to capture their audience. After talking to reporters from local papers, they described the difficulties writing under tight deadlines and working long hours in the evenings. However, these individuals described the union that writers form together, joking around with each other and lightening the mood during stressful times. For example, Columbus legend Larry Larson was covering his last state tournament after years of service to the area. To send Larson off with respect, the other reporters in press row all held up a picture of his face between games. While sports journalism has its difficulties, my participation in the “Be a Sports Journalist” program gave me the opportunity to witness the camaraderie and companionship between reporters.

In addition to the journalists, my experiences during the day taught me other possible career paths. By watching individuals run the tournament, I realized other options to combine my passion for sports with a future job. Specifically, some of these fields include corporate marketing and public relations. Possessing an interest in business, these career paths would allow me to work in a sports atmosphere with different responsibilities more guided towards business. Additionally, my time in press row gave me a greater understanding about the efforts and duties necessary to manage a large scale event. While sitting beside one of the event managers, his position required him to keep ahead of the action, determining which players to call to the interview room during the middle of the fourth quarter and making sure the box scores were distributed at halftime. After witnessing these actions, I now have a greater appreciation and understanding for the organization and skill set that must take place to keep the tournament running smoothly.

Likewise, the post game press conferences effectively captured the emotions of the players and put into perspective the true meaning of the tournament. After taking a seat in the press room after the first game, the victorious Saint Vincent Saint Mary's players entered the room with excitement and energy, commenting about the end of their high school basketball career. While frantically writing

down comments from the coaches, I glanced up to the podium, noticing the body language of the players. One individual sat staring into space with the net wrapped around his neck, recollecting his basketball dreams and in awe of the moment. On the contrary, the Harvest Prep players appeared sad and dejected, limiting their responses to a few words after their losing effort. As the interviews continued, these reactions from players held great importance to me. In essence, the responses of the players captured the emotions of the day, portraying both the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat.

While still contemplating my future career plans, my participation in the “Be a Sports Journalist” program provided me with an intriguing look into the field of sports reporting. During the first game, I felt overwhelmed and uncertain about the procedures of the journalists. However, while taking my seat for the final contest of the evening, my nerves had subsided and the situation appeared routine. Throughout the day, I became familiar with the intricate details of press row and developed a sense of comfort in the position. In a field of journalism, this program allowed me to become familiar with sports reporting in a low pressure situation, which will be vital for a sports assignment in the future.

Ultimately, the “Be a Sports Journalist” program provided me with a unique and memorable experience. I will never forget the exhilaration walking onto the court and being recognized in front of a packed arena. From an early age, my dreams envisioned leading my school basketball team to the state championship, sinking the winning basket, and running off the court with pride. Today, these dreams were fulfilled witnessing the intensity and excitement of the games as a reporter while grasping greater knowledge about possible career opportunities.