

# Sports Media 101: Truly The Beginning

## By Landen Nelson



Jim Roeder teacher at C4 Columbus Area Career Connection, Columbus East High School, and professor at Butler University. **P.C.** C4 Columbus Area Career Connection Facebook page.

If someone had told me, during my senior year of high school that I would be enrolling and receiving my post-secondary education at Butler University, I would have laughed and said “Yeah right, you are crazy.” I have grown up in a single-parent household since I was three and it has been my Mom and I against the world. With little support from my Dad, my Mom sacrificed time, energy, blood, sweat, and tears just for me to be happy and have a shot at success. I applied to Butler University in the fall of 2023 and knew I would probably never attend the university.

This was due to the financial situation my Mom and I were in. I knew my Mom could not make a sacrifice as big as paying for my university fees, especially at a private school that is one of the best in the nation. Well, I could not have been more wrong!

It was early May of 2024 my senior year and I was already enrolled at Western Kentucky University. The financial aid process of applying for school was a tough pill to swallow as my top two choices to earn a four-year degree at The University of Alabama and the University of Missouri were still too expensive despite financial aid. My third and final choice to attend college was Western Kentucky University despite the school decreasing my promised scholarships and amount of financial assistance. It was still somewhat affordable, I felt at home, and it was a great opportunity for me to become more of an independent adult plus I was located in a good media market situation living in Bowling Green, Kentucky and only being an hour away from Nashville, Tennessee. For example, the sports media opportunities with the Tennessee Titans, the National Corvette Museum, and the Nashville Predators. Then, in late May of 2024, I received a large Butler University financial aid envelope in the mail. My Mom and I opened the envelope and inside was a paper that listed off large amounts of numbers in the promised scholarships and financial aid department. Finally! The break I needed, finally a university was going to give me the opportunity to attend their school while they paid the majority of my fees. I guess the saying better late than never actually got me somewhere, it was better late than never for me to become a Butler Bulldog.

Being a Bulldog during my first semester of college has experienced a lot of downs. This is due to my stress, anxiety, and depression being at a lifetime high, resulting from me never

experiencing the college school workload, my lack of human connection because I am a commuter student, and managing all this while I worked two jobs simultaneously. This led to me negatively coping with my stress, anxiety, and depression, by pulling and twisting my hair out and creating a bald spot the size of a candy bar. The positive through all of this was having supportive professors like Jim Roeder, who actually cared about my well-being, and took the initiative to build a one-on-one relationship with me.

At the beginning of my time in Sports Media 101, it started off difficult failing my first college test in September of 2024. I was so disappointed in myself because before the test began my Mom paid for the rest of my first semester costs, and then I repaid her by failing a test. I talked to Professor Roeder about the situation while we walked to our cars and he told me “It is ok relax bud, there will be plenty of opportunities for you to get your grade back up during the first semester.” Fast forward to the end of the first semester and as I am writing this I have an 89% in the class and I am on the verge of having an A- in the class. From that experience, I learned that college tests are a lot more difficult than high school tests are. In addition, they require me to put more time into studying and focusing.

From that day on I learned my lesson to study and focus more before tests. As the first semester went on and I received more tests, my grades always improved on them. On my second test, I received an 80%, on my third test I received a 91%, and on my fourth test, I received a 100%. My confidence seemed to grow in the class as time went out, especially every time I took a test because my grades always improved, and I started to feel like I belonged and was at Butler for a reason.

The next learning experience I enjoyed in Sports Media 101 was learning about salaried employees vs. freelance employees. During Professor Roeder's lecture on this topic, I learned that I am a freelance employee. Before the lecture, the idea of being a freelance employee never popped into my head. During the time I worked at the Indianapolis Speedrome in my junior and senior year of high school as a camera operator, I technically was a freelance employee I just never realized it. I got paid a flat fee of \$100, and if I did not show up to work I was never paid or received any paid time off, and I had no benefits. Professor Roeder's story of becoming a freelance employee was very inspiring and interesting in how he was able to make a living and live a life being a freelance employee. For example, working all over the world filming for INDYCAR, NASCAR, NFL, NBA, ESPN, Fox Sports, and ABC, while also being married, and continuing to stay on his craft by purchasing expensive camera equipment. The thought of becoming a freelance employee when I am older and have gained more experience in the sports media world is definitely an option particularly due to the success Professor Roder had in the past.

The last experience I enjoyed learning about is the idea of the college football "Super Conference." Before Professor Roeder's lecture on the "Super Conference," I had never heard of it. It was very intriguing and impressive to see how college football could possibly look in a few years. Moreover, the Power Five conferences of the SEC, ACC, Big 10, Pac-12, Big 12, and Notre Dame all come together to create a 72-team conference. I very much like this idea as each team plays 13 games over 15 weeks and plays seven of those games at home or on the road or plays six of those games on the road or at home. In addition, the conference forms better geographic proximity with the teams all being split up into divisions by what region of the

United States they are located in. There should be no reason why the University of Miami is traveling clear across the nation to play the University of California, Berkeley. Also, there would be an increase of in-state rivalry and rivalry games played. Finally, one of the greatest rivalries in college football that the NCAA ruined (this is a shocker) by scheduling their next game in 2040 will play every year once again, this is Notre Dame VS. Michigan!

In conclusion, I am thankful to have been one of Professor Roeder's students and for all of the learning experiences along the way. I enjoyed my Sports Media 101 class very much because I was able to learn new information every day, more importantly, information on the career field I dream of being a part of someday. Thank you Professor Roeder for always being willing to offer me advice and support me of my goals, dreams, and aspirations. In addition, thank you for taking the time to always talk to me after class in the classroom or on our way to the parking garage. I am very grateful that you were one of my teachers, sir. God bless! I wish you the best in the future sir and I will make you proud!