

# Turning off the Friday Night Lights

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Anissa Gardizy, Editor in Chief • November 15, 2017 •





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Well, that's a wrap. On Friday, as the North Penn Knights football season came to and end, I spent my last Friday night in a press box. Since the game was played away at Garnet Valley, it was a long ride home for me that night. After being the North Penn football reporter for the last two years, I wasn't prepared for Friday night to be my last assignment, just like the Knights were not prepared for it to be their last game.

### The Beginning

I still remember exactly what it was like to cover my first North Penn football game last year as a junior. In fact, that article was the first article I ever wrote for the Knight Crier. That Friday was a totally new experience for me, and I learned a lot that night. I never wrote down the time on the clock when touchdowns were scored, and I forgot to hit the record button on my phone when interviewing Coach Beck. That article was a rough one, but it was the beginning of my interest in journalism.

Slowly as last season progressed, my football writing improved, and I found myself at every game, home or away. My Friday nights became all about the Knights. I would arrive to games about an hour ahead of time, and I would be up until past midnight getting the article done. After the article was published, I would tweet out the link on my Twitter account, and then go to bed. I'm really big on timeliness, and I wanted to make sure that people could wake up the next morning and read my article. One Saturday morning, waking up after a late night writing, I looked at my phone and saw a notification that I will never forget.

### *SOLsports Retweeted your Tweet*

"SOLsports" is the twitter account for the online Suburban One Sports publication, a website that covers all sports in the Suburban One area. It is the go-to place to find game articles, records, rankings, and athlete features. The fact that a publication with so much esteem was recognizing my work was a true motivator for me- I personally read Suburban One Sports all the time. Now, my articles get linked on their website and retweeted by other sports publications, two realities that I never would have thought possible a year ago. Little things like retweets and being linked on a website made writing my articles last year even more exciting.

### **The Interview**

I was really lucky last year to start my career as the football reporter with the 2016 Knights because North Penn's quarterback was Reece Udinski. When I say lucky, I do not mean lucky in the sense that Udinski lead North Penn to a 14-1 record, I mean lucky in the sense that Udinski always had a great postgame interview. He was easy to talk to, very professional, and always had an interesting perspective about the game. No matter how cold or tired he was after a game, he always came over when asked for an interview. After North Penn lost last year to St. Joe's Prep in a devastating game that ended their season, Udinski still agreed to be interviewed on the field when it was over. It was players like Udinski that made my reporting a little bit easier.

The same can't be said for every player, but as I continued writing game articles, I quickly learned which players liked being interviewed and which players did not. Overall, my interviewing experience has forced me to talk to people I don't know and think on the spot. Those are both skills that I now take to any article that I write.

### **North Penn Television**

What most people do not know is that for every home game, I was the color commentator for North Penn Television along with play-by-play announcer Jake Loburak. In most broadcasts, you can hear the sound of my camera snapping pictures for my articles in the background. Announcing and writing might seem hard to multitask, but I actually found it extremely beneficial. Providing analysis during the game and keeping stats only helped the formation of my game article later. The hardest aspect of announcing and writing was postgame interviews because I couldn't be on air and down on the field at the same time. Therefore, Jake and I worked out a system where I would sometimes "secretly" leave with three minutes

left to go in the fourth quarter to head down to the field. If you ever wondered why I didn't add any commentary in the final minutes of a game, it was because I was sprinting down to the field to grab interviews.

My favorite aspect of announcing home games was Jim, the man who sat in the bleachers in front of me and Jake for every home game. Before every game, Jim gave us a briefing on our performance from the previous week. Because of Jim, I know that if the score is 21-0, you say "twenty-one to nothing" instead of "twenty-one to zero" on air. I also know that when I use words like "great" or "interesting" too much, Jim will give me his tally. I don't know anyone else who has listened to every game I announce for the sole purpose of helping me become better, so thank you Jim.

Announcing is something I only do at home games, and this year, North Penn saw most of their early games on the road. Because of that, I started making highlight videos along with my articles for the away games. I got the process down to a system where I would take a camera and tripod to the top of a press box, film everyplay, and write it down in my notebook. For interviews, I would drive back to North Penn and have my camera and microphone setup and ready to go for when the Knights arrived back at the school. Making the videos was fun for me because I knew a lot of people were not able to make it to away games, and my videos offered an alternative way to get a quick visual recap of a game.

### **The Press Box**

I really like press boxes. I mean, I wrote my Common Application Essay about how press boxes have affected my life because I truly believe that they have. The press box at Crawford stadium has become a place where I have my own "spot" at the right end of the box. I have a plastic white chair that I sit in for every home game, but when I go to away games, it is a new experience every time. The physical attributes of press boxes changes and the atmosphere does too. Some boxes are crowded and loud with high energy, and other boxes have secluded rooms and calmness. Some are safe, and believe it or not, some are actually dangerous. One press box in particular was so dangerous I almost didn't cover the game. On the side of the press box's structure was a ladder. Yes, a ladder. Not a ladder that was connected to the box, but a house ladder that was propped up against it. If it wasn't for the fans who held the ladder and handed me my camera equipment while I made my ascent, I probably wouldn't have gone up on my own. From football game to football game, the anticipation of seeing what press boxes are like at other schools added an extra element of surprise to my travels.

I am a football reporter who prefers to cover games from a press box, but many reporters stand on the sidelines. To this day I do not know how they do it because find it much easier to figure out what is going on with a full perspective of the field.

### **Advantages of being in High School**

I may be among stadium announcers and reporters who have been working since before I was born, but being a high school journalist often played to my favor. For example, at CB East last year, I was the only one who knew why the North Penn sidelines stormed the field after

the Patriots had a big return. Of course, that was when Kelly Macnamara had her big hit, and it was really fun for me to try and explain the play's importance to the rest of the box. Being in high school also helps when reporters are looking to interview players after games. I don't need to rely on spotting jersey numbers because I go to school with the players and know what they look like.

## **The End**

Even though I will never write another football game article again, it was good while it lasted. From my first game to my last game, I have improved as a reporter, and that is due to my experiences in the press box and on the field on Friday nights. They say the best way to become a better writer is to write, and that is evident in my progression as a journalist. No matter how much I wish my first game article didn't exist, it is where I started, and I am happy with where I am today. I may not decide to enter a career in specifically sports journalism, but my time reporting for the Knights has definitely improved my writing and interviewing skills in more ways than I had ever imagined.