Benjamin Thomas

Sports Journalism

Feature: Jason Kersey

“I talk about OU Football all the time, cause that’s what everyone wants to talk with me about... even my father.”

From starting out in a grocery store on the east side of Norman, Oklahoma to covering and talking OU Football for one of the top sports journalism sites, Jason Kersey’s career has been nothing short of exciting.

Beginning his sports journalism career at the Oklahoman, Kersey was able to work his way up to covering one of the top college football programs in the country. That work and time he put in allowed him to get hired by The Athletic, where he solely covers OU Football and where his passion for sports journalism grew.

“I write every day, but don’t have a strict deadline or article published every day. They give us a lot of extra time to work on projects, and I'm able to connect better with the readers. It’s like the good part of a message board without the bad stuff.”

The Athletic, a paid subscription-based website, was a change for Kersey after being at the Oklahoman. For anyone, a change from newspaper to digital media can be tough but for Kersey that wasn’t an issue.

“Not really. I think it was sort of a relief to not have some of those strict print deadlines. It was a relief not to have to write every day or just to find something to turn out every day. So, no it was actually really nice transition.”

One of the big things Kersey liked when transitioning over to the Athletic was the audience. Different from print, and being a subscription-based site, it allows him to connect with many fans and diehards as well.

“I definitely think if you’re charging people for something, I think the niche audience is maybe better cause you have a loyal group of people paying you every month.”

That fan base of loyal followers was critical during the pandemic, as football season had lots of questions surrounding it heading into the 2020 season. For Kersey, no football makes it tougher to engage with his audience and be able to put out what readers want to see. He was able to continue to keep his following, and even add more during the pandemic through his creativity of his story ideas, which fans enjoyed.

“I write solely about football. It’s a little tough to come up with things when it’s not happening. There are things you can dive into but it’s not easy. I tried to get creative and that’s really all you can do.”

That’s exactly what he did. Putting out stories about very narrow topics, giving the readers and his following anything to read during the pandemic. From top plays to top moments, even ranking players, Kersey found that people just wanted something to read. So, he and his team gave them exactly that.

Throughout his time working with The Athletic, Kersey has seen that it’s a step up from traditional sites. Through its clean experience, and being subscription based, he believes there's no better site to read and work for than the company he is employed by.

“You’d expect me to say this because I am an employee but I’m sincere when I say if I didn’t work there [The Athletic], I would still read the Athletic all the time.