Benjamin Thomas

Sports Journalism

Feature: John Hoover- Sports Illustrated

“Out of nowhere, two years ago, about a month after getting laid off I’m wondering what I am going to do... Sports Illustrated calls and says we’re developing a new product, covering colleges and pro teams around the country on a network type bases, we want you to be the publisher of SI Sooners”

For John Hoover, a former writer at Tulsa World, the day he got this phone call was the day his life changed for the better.

“It is fantastic. It is the best job I’ve ever had, believe it or not.”

After over 20 years at the Tulsa World, Hoover never would have thought his job could get better until now. Why? Cause he gets to oversee and run all operations for Sports Illustrated Sooners. He dictates what the needs, and guidelines are, and while lots of the needs and guidelines stem from Sports Illustrated itself, in the end, he still runs it all.

“With the revenue and opportunities and doors that Sports Illustrated opens that’s the way to go.”

His job has opened many doors, especially through covering a team like the Oklahoma football program. Getting to interview top athletes, world-renowned head coaches and coaching staff, there's never a dull moment in the life of John Hoover. One of the many opportunities he got to partake in was getting to follow Bob Stoops throughout his time in Oklahoma. While Bob Stoops went on to become a hall of fame head coach and deal with many people throughout the media, Hoover was one of the few Stoops didn’t enjoy.

“I would get kind of a bulldog mentality, it’s the way I came up with the newspaper industry, just kind of put your teeth on something and don’t let go and Bob Stoops never liked that Journalism.”

When it came to Hoover’s style of journalism, albeit a successful style, he wanted to know something, he kept hounding you till he got what he wanted. Stoops, a coach who would give his vague answer and want you to only take that and run with it, didn’t enjoy this style and for years would criticize and react poorly towards Hoover on multiple occasions.

“That’s where I got under Bob’s skin a lot. I see you trying to shut me down, but you are not answering my question. It was such a weird dynamic with me and Bob all the time.”

Even at times, a fellow reporter would ask the same question John would ask, yet Bob would only answer them and not Hoover.

It was one of the many experiences and opportunities John Hoover has been able to cover while writing about Oklahoma football whether it was for Sports Illustrated or the Tulsa World but in the end, Sports Illustrated was where Hoover was meant to be.

“The money’s better, the opportunities are better, when you call someone and say I’m John Hoover, Sports Illustrated, they call you back every time. For the most part, I make all the decisions and I just love that.”