

Award-winning sportscaster reflects on path towards career

Andy Kendeigh was not always an award-winning sportscaster. In fact, the 2014 Nebraska Sportscaster of the year was pretty close to being fired from his internship at a local news station in Madison, Wisconsin during his junior year of college.

"I was a terrible intern," said Kendeigh. "I would frequently bail on my boss because of other commitments along with school, and he wanted to let me go on my way. But I told him I would do anything to keep this internship and he said ok and decided to put me on weekend shifts."

Kendeigh's persistence paid off. He ended up working at that station for more than three years. He also waited tables and worked other odd jobs while trying to work his way up in the journalism world.

Kendeigh always knew he wanted a career in sports. He especially wanted to do play-by-play for live games. He grew up idolizing local Chicago sportscasters such as Jack Brickhouse and Harry Caray, which makes sense being Kendeigh was a huge Cubs fan growing up.

"My mom would always say that when I was a little boy I would cry every time the Cubs lost and they lost a lot so I cried a lot as a kid I guess," joked Kendeigh.

Kendeigh came to Omaha in 2010. His journey to the heartland could be considered destiny.

After high school, Kendeigh went on to the University of Wisconsin in Madison Wisconsin. After college he stayed in Madison as a job opened up at WKOW in the summer of 1993. There, he became number the three guy working part-time on weekends. After about a year, an opportunity opened up for Kendeigh to be the main weekend reporter/anchor at WKOW. Five years later another job opened up for Kendeigh at the ABC affiliate in Milwaukee. He worked at the Milwaukee station for 11 years. In 2010 long-time KETV Channel 7 sports director Jon Schuetz decided to leave the broadcasting industry and that paved the way for Kendeigh. Interestingly enough, he already had a connection Omaha. His wife is an Omaha native and graduate of Omaha Central.

Kendeigh has now been at KETV for five years or "five football seasons" as he describes. His main title is "sports director."

“Most sports directors are usually the main anchors or sports face at the anchor desk,” said Kendeigh. “In addition to that they are also in charge of scheduling, directing coverage such as determining which stories to go, and structuring sports coverage on a daily weekly, monthly and yearly basis.”

The characteristics to determining a good or newsworthy story include: timeliness, proximity, prominence, significance and human interest. For Kendeigh it is going beyond those characteristics that truly make a promising sports story.

“The most important element of a good story is does it appeal to sports fan and the non sports fan,” said Kendeigh. “Because if you get too technical, you’re going to alienate the people that don’t know much about sports, but if you dumb it down too much you alienate the people that know a lot about sports.”

Journalists follow AP style guidelines for everything they ranging from articles to tweets. However for broadcasters such as Kendeigh, writing scripts for a daily broadcast, following AP style may not be the main focus.

“The rules when writing a script is a little looser because the most important thing when writing a script in my opinion is making sure the anchor can read it,” said Kendeigh.

Within the last decade social media has played an integral role in how journalists and broadcasters export news to the public. And Kendeigh is no exception. Kendeigh already has 3,412 followers on Twitter with 4,022 tweets since joining twitter in July 2010, around the same time he joined KETV in Omaha. However Kendeigh thinks his twitter game is slacking.

“I’m still learning,” said Kedeigh. “The reason why I know it’s important [social media] is because I get no greater feedback or activity on my Twitter timeline than when I cover the high school tournaments. My Twitter explodes when I cover a high school tournament. There are so many high school students that use it and college kids that use it. It’s what they know and what they use and it’s not going to go away.

Tweeting and writing scripts are a totally different ballgame. Kendeigh understands the importance of credibility even when it comes to 140 characters.

“Misspellings drive me nuts,” said Kendeigh. “If you have a misspelling here or there it’s probably not the end of the world, but if it keeps coming up it kind of hurts your credibility. It’s so important to be accurate and minimize major gaps because it’s out there. It’s all on tape.”

Throughout the last couple decades of his career, Kendeigh has created many stories and conducted multiple interviews with sports legends such as Michael Jordan, LeBron James and Tiger Woods. He has covered events ranging from the NFL playoffs to Rose Bowls. But there was one story and one interviewee that trumped them all.

“I did a story on Donald Driver who inspired this high school football player in Northern Illinois who had autism,” said Kendeigh.

Kendeigh explained that the football player would wear number 80 because of Driver. His team decided to do something special during one of the games and decided to work with the opposing team to get the autistic player the ball, understanding that he might catch the ball. Amazingly enough, the player caught the ball and ran it for a touchdown. Kendeigh went to go interview the player, his teammates and the opposing team as well because they all came together to help create a special moment. Kendeigh later on showed the story to Driver and then the former Packer sent a digital message to the autistic football player that Kendeigh played for him.

The story won many state broadcasting awards and was eventually nominated for an Emmy. But Kendeigh said that is not the important part.

“The important part is that I could still watch this story today and still be moved by it,” said Kendeigh.

For all those young journalists and broadcasters that want to follow Andy’s path, he has a few words of advice.

“Ask questions and don’t be afraid to reach out,” said Kendeigh. “If you really want to do something go after it.”