

Nick Westby: The story of The Yorkshire Post's sports editor

Yorkshire is world famous for its sporting prowess. From the Brownlee brothers to Leeds United and the epic Ashes Test matches hosted at Headingley Stadium, there is sporting lore coming from every corner of the county.

For generations, those who have not been able to attend or compete in the events have read up on the action through reports in the Yorkshire Post. Therefore, the sports editor and reporters have a hugely important job of detailing the biggest races and matches of the day.

This is where Nick Westby comes in. He has been at the Yorkshire Post since 2008 and has been editor of its back pages for the last eight years, reporting on everything from steel city derbies to the Olympic Games.

It all began when a young Westby decided that elite sport was out of reach, but writing match reports could still be a way for him to be in the environment of the greats.

Fast forward to getting his degree, Westby was still a keen sports writer and was able to take the opportunities available to a young journalist in the early 2000s.

Westby says: "I did journalism at the University of Lincoln and did a lot of work experience. I was fortunate in 2001 that there were lots of trainee reporter roles. They're not something that young reporters have an abundance of anymore but I got one at the South Yorkshire Times."

Westby is a strong believer in taking on any chances that come your way. It was this philosophy that got him the part-time role of sports editor when the South Yorkshire Times' left, but as he was still a reporter in training, he had to get the basics of news down first.

Once all his exams were completed, Westby got his head down and started writing freelance, knowing the more experience he had and the better his portfolio was, the more he would stand out and the better his prospects would be.

"I was working for the Times alongside doing as much work as I could for national newspapers, building up a strong portfolio and experience covering matches, so when the opportunity at the Yorkshire Post came up in 2008, I was in a strong position," says Westby.

Though football was one of his favourite sports, Westby quickly learnt that the ability to cover any sport would come in handy when finding work. He started in the Dearne Valley, where rugby union and boxing were popular sports.

Westby's lack of knowledge of these two sports may have deterred others from covering them, but it soon became clear that interviewing and writing were the key skills, and once they were down, he could do any sport necessary.

But Westby never wrote with the arrogance of pretending to be an expert in the sport he was writing about, using this to find common ground with his reader.

"You should never be afraid to say that you're learning the sport alongside the reader. That's how I've gone about things and that's helped me write about so many sports, if you like football, write about it, but try to find a niche too," Westby says.

Westby's long career has seen him report on massive sporting moments: the summer of 2014 saw Yorkshire host a leg of the Tour de France, which helped warm his sporting brain to the world of cycling. He also took himself over to Miami, Florida for Superbowl 54. NFL is a sport Westby already had a taste for, and so was able to share the experience with the Post's audience.

But the highlight of his career was covering the 2012 Olympics in London. In the Games, Yorkshire earned an impressive 12 medals, including seven golds. Athletes in rowing, riding and cycling were the white rose county's big winners, of course alongside triathlete, Jonathan Brownlee.

Westby says: "Covering London 2012 was amazing, especially with Yorkshire's success, the days were long, but it was incredibly rewarding. I saw some amazing sporting achievements; there's nothing like an Olympics."

A seasoned journalist like Westby knows the trade well and believes it can never be finished. He feels there is always more to learn and anyone getting into the industry should appreciate what it takes to have daily deadlines.

He also knows that opportunities have to come from yourself, and the courage to put your hand up and take a chance can pay off more than you could imagine. The industry has slowed, admittedly, but diligence and resourcefulness will always be admired characteristics.

"You've got to be patient but persistent and almost create the opportunities for yourself, keep applying and showing tenacity. You can always shape a job once you get it, I've shaped every job I've had in journalism," concludes Westby.