

The GAME Plan



Work can be play for the many communications grads who cover sports

BY MICHAEL ARACE



Jeané Coakley '01 at the anchor desk at WISH-TV in Indianapolis.



here was a time when Eric Yutzy '02 wanted to play for the Boston Celtics. Actually, he still wants to play for the Celtics, but he hasn't had the requisite growth spurt, and he's not expecting it at age 27.

Yutzy had to adjust his outlook on gainful employment. At Quinnipiac, he first focused on occupational therapy but, he said with candor, he couldn't cut it. Then, he considered psychology and also dabbled in sociology.

At some point, he tripped over the answer. He found his calling. He would be a television sports reporter. What he didn't consider was that most every Little Leaguer and recreational basketball player has a similar notion. Height, weight and coordination are not required to cover games, right? If you can't get your picture in *Sports Illustrated*, you can get a byline, right? Or, you can host an all-sports radio talk show, or do highlights on the 6 o'clock news, or ... yes, even call the play-by-play! If that chump at ESPN can do it, I can do it!

There is a catch.

Getting a job in the burgeoning sports media business is a difficult proposition. Newspaper offices, TV stations and radio studios are littered with resumes and tapes from aspiring sports experts. Turnover is slow. Competition for jobs is fierce.

Yutzy made it. He's a sports anchor and reporter at WTVF-TV in Nashville, Tenn. The Associated Press also chose him as 2007 Tennessee sportscaster of the year.

"I do something I love," he said, "and I make a living at it."

Jeané Coakley '01 made it. She's a sports reporter and anchor at WISH-TV in Indianapolis. She won two Associated Press awards for features she did at her previous job, in Arizona.

"I can't believe people pay me to do this," she said.

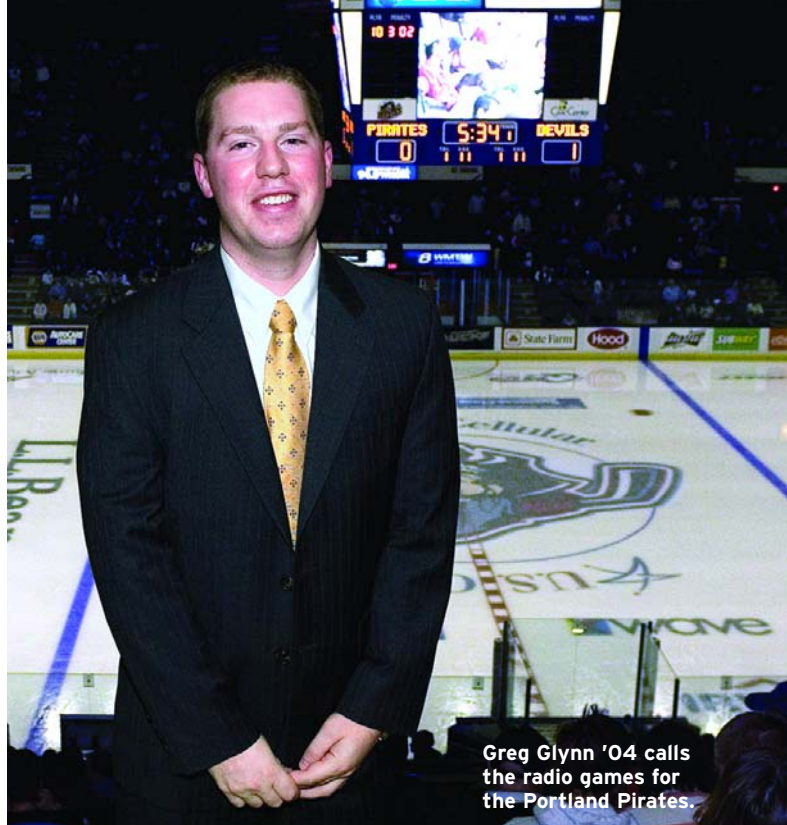
Greg Glynn '04 is on his way. He's vice president of communications for the Portland Pirates, the American Hockey League affiliate of the Anaheim Ducks, reigning champions of the National Hockey League. By day, he handles a litany of public relations and marketing duties. On game nights, he's the play-by-play radio voice of the team.

"I wake up every morning and pinch myself," he said.

They didn't just roll out of bed and get a job. "So many kids want to go into sportswriting or broadcasting, and they think it's going to be handed to them on a platter," said Bill Schweizer, associate professor of communications and the voice of Quinnipiac basketball and hockey. "The majority don't realize what it takes to go after it. You've really got to roll up your sleeves if you want to do this job."

Yutzy's friend suggested he write sports for the campus paper, *The Chronicle*. Instantly, he was hooked. He settled on a major in communications and a minor in marketing. He was packaged for stardom.

His first job after graduation was at a Chili's restaurant, in the Boston area. He got his first TV gig, at a station in Dayton, Ohio, with the



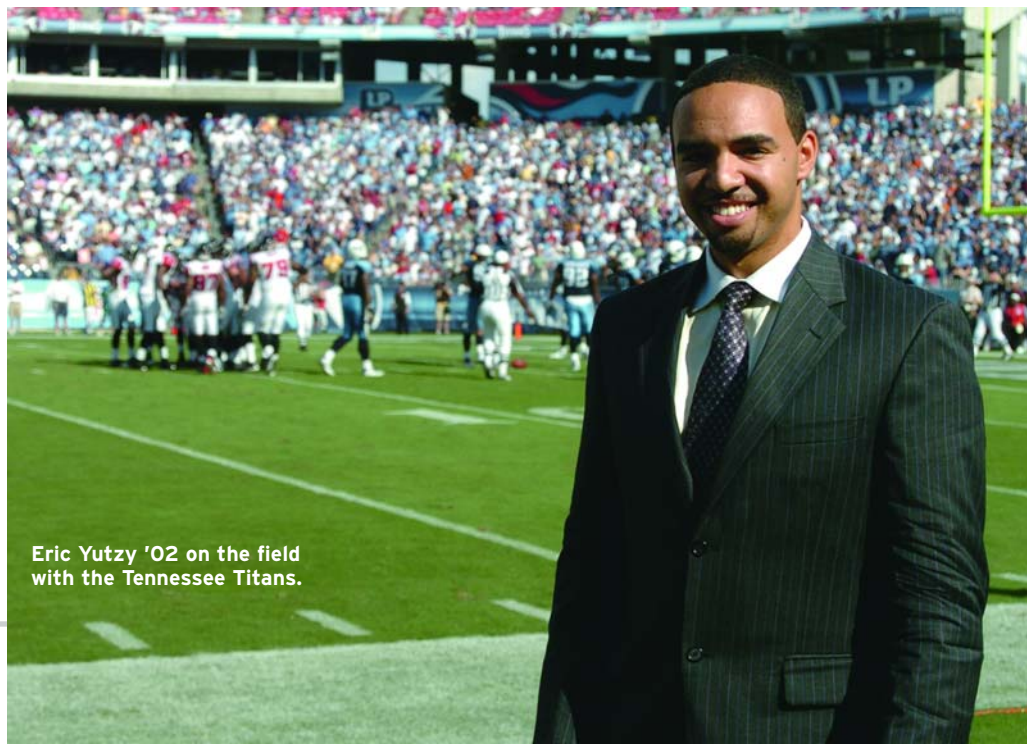
Greg Glynn '04 calls the radio games for the Portland Pirates.

help of a former professor. One day, he was serving nachos to table 10. The next, he was thrown in front of a camera as a news reporter. He did this for 10 months until he could find something in sports. He moved to Atlantic City, where he was tossed behind the sports anchor's desk. He learned on the fly.

"When I was in college, I told myself that I'd be in a top-30 market within three years," Yutzy said. "I don't know how I could've thought that, but here I am. A lot of people say, 'Oh, that's such a tough business—competitive.' You have to think you're better than the next guy. It's not cockiness, so much. It's a confidence thing."

Yutzy landed in Nashville in 2004. He now lives for autumn weekends. He packages high school football on Friday nights, covers Southeastern Conference college football on Saturdays and focuses on the NFL Tennessee Titans on Sundays. He sees the gamut of the game and, to be prepared, his homework is prodigious.

"You've got to get in there and mess with stuff. Get dirty," Yutzy said.



Eric Yutzy '02 on the field with the Tennessee Titans.

“That’s what matters—knowing what you’re doing, and being willing to do what others won’t to get the job done.”

Coakley knew what she wanted to do as soon as she interned with WTNH-TV in New Haven. There, sports anchor John Pierson supplied sage advice: Go behind the scenes in order to appreciate being in front of the camera. Coakley may have listened too intently. Her first job was in Billings, Mont., at a start-up station. Everyone was new, everyone was in their first job. She, as a producer, usually caught the flak when anything went awry. “It was crazy,” she said, “but I learned sooo much.”

Her next job was as a news reporter in Plattsburgh, N. Y. She wasn’t too thrilled with this one, either, but she punched in every day, moved in front of the camera and polished her skills. Like Yutzy, she wanted to be involved with sports. She was on her high school gymnastics team and played soccer, volleyball and softball, but hung up her cleats to cover sports instead.

She got her chance in Yuma, Ariz. She flew with the Navy’s Blue Angels and passed out three times. She parachuted with the Army’s Golden Knights. In sum, she went to great heights to get good stories. Within seven months, she was sports director at the station.

“I have a lot of positive energy, and I think people pick up on that,” she said. “People say to me all the time, ‘You look like you love what you’re doing.’ And it’s true.”

Last year, Coakley landed in Indianapolis, one of America’s sports-mad cities and home to the Super Bowl champion Colts. She chats up coach Tony Dungy and the ubiquitous quarterback, Peyton Manning. She thrives in the madness of Indiana high school basketball. There’s also college football and the NBA to cover.

This brand of effervescent energy is also imbued in Glynn, whose work ethic at Quinnipiac was the stuff of legend.

“Greg—I remember that guy,” Yutzy said. “I don’t think he ever left the radio station.”

Glynn played hockey as a kid, until he was diagnosed with spondylolisthesis, a degenerative disc condition in the lower back. From the moment he put away his skates, he wanted to do something in the field of sports broadcasting. At Quinnipiac, he worked for the sports information office, the newspaper and the TV and radio stations. He found a mentor in Schweizer, a former CBS play-by-play man. Schweizer supplied increasing on-air opportunities, and Glynn relished every on-air minute he could get.

“From the first time he stepped into the booth as a freshman, he was one of the most prepared broadcasters I’ve ever seen do a game,” Schweizer said. “And for a kid to get an AHL job right out of college is an extraordinary first step.”

There are scores of candidates for play-by-play gigs at every level of the business, including the AHL level of hockey. Glynn was on his way to Portland before he got his last report card.

“He’s a beauty, this guy,” said Kevin Dineen, the Pirates’ coach and former Hartford Whalers star. “He has about six titles around here, from director of advertising to chief of marketing. He’s doing all those things you’ve got to do at the AHL level to build a resume, which is everything. He’s on the fast track to wherever he’s going.”

Glynn is happy, but he’s not content. Not exactly.

“I know a guy in this league who’s 32 or 33 years old, and he has a wife and two kids, and he had to give up the microphone because it just became too much with the family and all,” Glynn said. “I’m at the point

where I can aggressively go after it. The goal is to do play-by-play in the NHL. Or, maybe, I can wind up as a sports anchor, like you see on SportsCenter. I’ll keep trying to get there.”

Glynn, Coakley and Yutzy emerged from incubation in the shadow of the Sleeping Giant to find a place in sports broadcasting, an insanely competitive field that requires quick thinking and slick speaking on air, and bare arms off the air. See, the sleeves must be rolled up.

SPORTS FIELD ABOUNDS WITH ALUMNI

The School of Communications offers specialized courses and training that prepare students for careers in sports media.

Quinnipiac has many alumni working in the world of sports who keep in touch with their professors as their careers progress. A survey of professors turned up these alumni. If your name is not here and you are working in sports, drop us a class note at www.quinnipiac.edu/classnotes.xml

ESPN in Bristol, Conn., is a fertile ground for Quinnipiac internships. Alumni who make their living with the network include: Erin Ade '06, ESPN Star Sports, Singapore; Mark Caswell MS '07, studio technician; Jason Chin '84, global production; Dennis Cleary '99, operations producer; Danielle Cranin '03, associate manager, programming; Michael Kataja, '04, broadcast video editor; Brian Kelly '99, NFL producer-writer for *espn.com*; James McCarty '04, assignment editor; Courtney Nebons, '05, media operator; Kevin Stewart '06, production assistant; and current graduate students Corey AmEnde, commercial operations coordinator; Michael Lyle and Amanda Lockwood, ESPN radio; D'Arcy Maine, Molly Qerim and Jennifer Williams, all mobile anchors.

Sports networks: Kevin Brown '07, tape librarian, VER-SUS; Kevin Newton, producer/editor, NESN; Glenn Giagrande '03, writer-researcher, and Joseph Auriemma, associate producer, statistician and researcher, both at YES; Dominic Scarano '06, coordinator, XM radio PGA Network.

Sports public relations and marketing: Kimber Auerbach MS '06 (journalism), director of media relations/game operations, Bridgeport Sound Tigers; Tim Beach '90, director of game day operations, New York Islanders; Matt Chumura MS '07, sports information, Merchant Marines Academy; Lauren Jacobi '07, special events, NBA; Nick Razzette '07, media relations manager, Bridgeport Bluefish.

Sports production: Chris Lawler '93, Bob Clarke '93 and Peter Gallay '06, production assistant, WWF, Stamford; Eric Brenner '07, assistant camera/utility, and Ben Shapiro '07, freelance audio technician, Greenline Productions, Boston.

Sports print media: Bernie Augustine '03, reporter, *Staten Island Advance*; Kristen Daley '02, associate editor, *USTA magazine*, Fairfield; Brendan Dowding '07, sportswriter, *Northeast Independent*, Rhode Island; Brian Girasoli MS '07, *Norwich Bulletin*; Jason Siedzik '03, *North Haven Citizen*.