

Sports Broadcasting: An Interview With Ian Nicholas

Q: What role did sports play in your life growing up?

A: “It played a massive role. Because of it, I would love to get into the field of sports commentary because I love the sports of football, basketball, lacrosse, and baseball. But, actually growing up I played a bunch of different sports that my parents kind of just chucked me into and they aren’t big sports fans. I was a black belt in taekwondo by the third grade. But it wasn’t until fourth grade that I started to follow the New York Giants and the NFL that I found my love for football and that is where I became a sports addict. Over the last few years, however, it has been all about baseball and lacrosse that have grown on me and have led me to further my passion for sports commentary.

Q: What makes you zealous about sports broadcasting?

A: “ I found that I love sports commentary when I would watch Giants games with my father. In the middle of the games, I would start commentating the game to myself with him in the room and he would say things like “Quiet down.” or that he wanted “To hear the professionals.”. It was at that moment that I kind of realized that this was something that I could do. I knew that I wouldn’t be playing the game of football because I’m 5’6”. I knew that I wouldn’t be coaching because I never really played football. It was the Madden NFL video game that made me wonder “Could I do this?” Eventually, I did in high school. We had a great high school television station and I was able to have a sports commentary role there my sophomore year and the rest is history.

Q: What has been/is the hardest thing about sports broadcasting?

A: “The hardest thing that I think that a lot of other people don’t realize is the preparation aspect of it. You could be the quickest thinking person in the world or you could react to something in a heartbeat (which does take skill) but you have to be prepared. Preparation is not only knowing who is on the field, floor, etc. at the moment, but the coaching staff, and the history of the teams. It is also preparation for your on-air ability. For example: how are you using your hands, are you looking at the right camera at the right time, are you reacting the way you should be reacting, etc. Again, there is a lot more preparation than people think.

Q: What has been the most exciting thing about sports broadcasting so far?

A: “Well, I know what you are alluding to, the work that I was able to do with ESPN and

their “Kid-Cast” during the Little League World Series. That was extremely exciting; to be just 18 years old and having the opportunity to call two games on national television. One is the Little League World Series game but also the other one is an MLB game. This was something that I knew a lot of broadcasters never had the opportunity to do and I did not take it for granted. There were many exhilarating things about those games like working for a production crew that big. Some other parts that stood out were, getting to work with Mo’ne Davis, getting to interview Rob Manfred (commissioner of MLB), and getting to interview Alex Rodriguez live on air. But, all the big moments are the best because when you are live, at a game or event that is building up to a big moment that is the best for me. It could be the high school where I grew up or Williamsport, one of the

most iconic sports venues in the world, and I would treat both with the same technique.”

Q: What has been the best part about being the beat reporter for the Women’s lacrosse team on Citrus TV?

A: “It has been amazing. It was a position that I was gunning for and I am excited that all my hard work during the first semester paid off. I’ve had the job since December but games only started last week. I think that the most exciting part for me thus far is being in the Carrier Dome and covering such a great team. To me, it is so much easier to cover a good team than it is to cover a bad team because you have to do less thinking. I have also been able to work on my craft with a lot of continued support because, with such a big beat, you will get a lot of support, feedback, advice, etc.”

Q: Marty Glickman once said, “Sports are, and should be, a joy. And it delights me that the joy I felt through the years of broadcasting games was projected onto the audience.” Do you agree with this quote?”

A: “You know I am pretty sure I have heard this quote somewhere and I could not agree with it more.”

Q: Tell me more about that, what was it like meeting A-rod, and what was the experience like in general?

A: It was wild because after all, I am a Yankees fan. I remember the first time I saw him in person; I was in a production trailer before the MLB game on that Sunday night. I was sitting with my other broadcasters and when A-Rod comes in he is this larger-than-life

guy both personality-wise and literally (he was massive). I looked at him and thought “Wow! This is the real deal!” He went around a first introduced himself to a few other people in the trailer. I knew he had no idea who I was and I didn’t blame him. After that, I didn’t see him until the game. Both the professional crew and the “Kids-Cast” crew were broadcasting to the right of us, right behind home plate and I knew when he was going to come on (top of the third inning). I got up from my chair once he came over. I shook his hand and introduced myself and he introduced himself (obviously I already knew exactly who he was), then we sat down, and maybe a minute or two later we were on the air. I ended up truly meeting him through interviewing him. He was phenomenal with me and the other broadcasters. He said some nice things to me once we were off the air and ultimately I was very pleased with how it went.”

Q: How did you initially get started in sports broadcasting?

A: “I alluded to what led me to choose it but I got my start in my high school television station, NCTV78. I had a great mentor by the name of Roman Cebulski who is the head of the TV broadcasting program at the high school. I started freshman year in the lower level class and I loved it. Even though I didn’t have a lot of on-air opportunities, I saw what sports broadcasting was all about. From weekly live broadcasting of the entire school to streaming sports and I loved all of it. So, I continued it in my sophomore year as well. However that previous summer, I got involved with Bruce Beck’s sports broadcasting camp which I found out about through my high school. Mr. Beck, a famous sports anchor, came into our class one day and pitched his program to us. During that class, I got up and did a mock sports report, to which Mr. Beck said “You have a lot of potential.” I ended up going to the camp each of the next four summers which is how I landed the gig with ESPN. Getting back to high school though, a lot of opportunities and reps made me fall in love with sports broadcasting. My first true opportunity arose sophomore year when I was still on the football team. I was asked if I wanted to do color commentary for the football games. I then had two choices and I chose to be a sports broadcaster. Halfway through my sophomore year is when I truly started to love it. I dropped football soon after to focus on sports broadcasting and that is what I continue to do here at Syracuse University.”

Q: How has sports broadcasting affected your life?

A: “It has changed my life. Not only has it changed what it is going to be, but it has also changed me as a person. In middle and early high school, I was not a very outgoing person and was a bit shy. It all kind of changed when I did my first sports broadcast and the reaction from everyone was so positive. Not only my friends but the whole town became proud of me once I continued to show up on the live streams of their kids’ games. I later became the Senior class president later on down the line and they respected the

work that I had put in. I appreciated that and through that, I gained so much confidence in myself. My personality did a 180 and now I was outgoing and bold. So, I would say that is how my life has changed through sports broadcasting.”

Q: What advice would you give to all the young kids in middle/high school that want to become a sports broadcaster?

A: “You might not have the opportunities that I had but, that still doesn’t mean that you can create your own opportunities regardless of whether you are in middle or high school. I see people on TikTok and Instagram who are producing sports content, they are calling games with their friends, doing podcasts with each other, etc. Create your own reps; show up to your high school game and call it the way you think it should be called. Try to find mentors/people in the field who would be willing to critique your work so you can know where to build. If you have an opportunity in the sports broadcasting world, take it and run with it because when you get to college you will be ahead of the game. If you can’t do that, create your own opportunities. Don’t psych yourself out, it is not that hard.”

Sports broadcasting can be one of the most fun yet difficult professions out there depending on how you look at it. According to Indeed, one of the biggest job recruiting websites in the world, “A sports broadcaster is an individual who reports on sports news, analyzes the world of sports, or gives play-by-play announcements during a game. They may work for an individual sports team or a sports network, reporting on various sports as part of their job responsibilities. ([Indeed](#)) Just from my experience, for every one successful sports broadcaster, there are hundreds of failed attempts to become one. The road to becoming a sports broadcaster is not an easy one. It is filled with trials, hard work, late nights, and of course failure. People often discount the fact of how much work and preparation goes into this career. According to USA Today, Joe Buck was ranked the number one sports broadcaster in the country to start 2021. ([USA Today](#)) Late last October and early last November, Buck was lucky enough to call his 21st consecutive World Series. Buck also is an announcer for the NFL on Fox, alongside Troy Aikman. As Ian Nicholas alluded to in our interview and me, just a few sentences ago, that takes literal decades of skill and preparation. That is what people don’t realize. You don’t wake up one day and know everything. In his own words Nicholas says, “The hardest thing that I think that a lot of other people don’t realize is the preparation aspect of it. You could be the quickest thinking person in the world or you could react to something in a heartbeat (which does take skill) but you have to be prepared. Preparation is not only knowing who is on the field, floor, etc. at the moment, but the coaching staff, and the history of the teams. It is also preparation for your on-air ability. For example: how are you using your hands, are you looking at the right camera at the right time, are you reacting the way you should be reacting, etc.” Not to mention unlike some professions today, you have to have at least a bachelor’s degree in the field of sports broadcasting or a field related to that. ([Learn](#)) Although the hard work can pay off. Take it from Mr. Nicholas who took a class in freshman year of high school, went to a sports broadcasting camp, and about four-and-half years later he finds himself on ESPN at just 18 years old. However, with the hard work comes a decent / extremely decent payout. The median annual rookie salary for sports broadcasters is \$ 55,442 with the opportunity of earning just over six digits. ([Zip Recruiter](#))

On top of all of that, you might not have the experience that Nicholas or other broadcasters had. As Nicholas states, “You might not have the opportunities that I had but, that still doesn’t mean that you can create your own opportunities regardless of whether you are in middle or high school.” If you don’t have the opportunities, you can make a social media account and post sports graphics there where you break down the game. It doesn’t have to be much, just a sentence or two, but keep on it. You can also create your own podcast or “TV show”. There is however one huge downside to the sports broadcasting industry, and that is in past years this particular job field has not seen much growth over the last few years. ([Sports Management Degrees](#)) The most challenging time for sports broadcasters in history was when the COVID-19 pandemic first hit. A lot of broadcasters were sent home and had to make do with calling the games from their house. Len Berman, a broadcaster for NBC states, “Since March, we have been broadcasting from home. I live on Long Island, and my co-host, Michael Riedel, is in Manhattan.

Meanwhile, our newsman Joe Bartlett is broadcasting from Hilton Head.” ([Berman](#)) Imagine that! One day you are calling a game with a stadium packed full of people and the next you are calling it from your office at your own house. Let us end this on a good note, shall we? As Nicholas stated, “That was extremely exciting; to be just 18 years old and having the opportunity to call two games on national television.” There is a really exciting part to sports broadcasting, and that is being able to broadcast the teams you like and possibly prime time & championship games. Even if it is your high school football team in the state championship, you should still take it as seriously as if you were doing the play-by-play for the Super Bowl. So, if you want to be a sports broadcaster, you can do it. It is going to take some dedication but that hard work will pay off later on down the road.

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