

Reflective Commentary
News Writing for Web

I began my internship in September 2003 with no prior news writing experience and no expectation that it would be a responsibility of the internship position. Through my first three years of higher education, I had acquired a growing fondness for writing, and I had always had a passion for basketball, so when I learned that writing for Sixers.com would be a regular task, I was certainly interested.

As I look back on the first article I wrote for the site, a September 16 feature about Sixers rookies Willie Green and Kyle Korver enjoying their first Philly cheesesteaks, I am amused by the weakness of my ability. Honestly, when compared to my later articles, the cheesesteak feature was ashamedly elementary. With its two quotes and only one small paragraph of actual content, the photo of the two players was larger than the story.

I learned a lot from this first experience. Although the article was brief and relatively uninteresting, Brian Kirschner, my supervisor, allowed it to be published to the site, where several thousand visitors would discover it over the next week. The most important lesson Mr. Kirschner taught me as a result of this first feature was that many times a news writer must develop a story out of a small amount of primary information. Although the article's main focus was the rookies' first cheesesteaks, I could have talked about how the Sixers first acquired the players, how they performed in college, and what Sixers' General Manager Billy King had said about their potential. I was quickly learning that, in both language and structure, writing feature stories for the web was much different than writing the term papers that I had become so accustomed to in many years of academia.

My second article was co-written with the 76ers' other New Media intern, Kevin Maney, a Communications major from the University of South Carolina. Having written for USC's football team and the Super Bowl XXXVI Host Committee in the past, he brought much more writing experience to Philadelphia than me. From him, I learned more about the usage of quotes and the informality of news writing as compared to academic writing.

After this article was published, each successive feature I published was researched and written without any major assistance. Mr. Kirschner continued to edit each of my articles before deployment and commented on a few occasions about the rapid development of my ability. I began to gain confidence in my writing, and I really began to understand structure and language. I began to know what questions to ask the players in order to adequately support my story and to understand how to build a story around players' quotes.

I believe a brief review of my published articles, ten in all, reveals this development of my writing. I leave my internship with much more confidence in my overall writing ability, and I now have much less anxiety toward writing for web or print in the future, should a prospective position require it of me.