

Robert's Rant:

Writing for your community was an honour and privilege I will hold dear]

By Robert Belardi

opinion

I will never forget the day I received the phone call.

It was at my grandfather's funeral viewing, no less. A suggested name 'Zach Shoub' was displayed on my phone screen as the phone rang. My girlfriend 'now fiancée' pointed out to me that it was for the sports and general interest reporter job I had so desperately desired.

I walked out of the room and answered the call. I received the position, to be the next guy at the helm of everything sport for The Auroran, the King Weekly Sentinel and Caledon Citizen.

I wasn't sure where to begin to process it. I was consumed by grief and mourning, all fused together with happiness and jubilation. Emotions churned inside of me like butter and I couldn't believe that I had finally found something in my field and my dream job to boot.

I was always a lover of sport since I was young and I always dreamed of being on television one day. I wanted to be a morning anchor on TSN. So, in my youth, while playing video games, I would turn off the commentary and do it myself. I attempted to mimic the announcers and would point to in-game statistics and make sure I was saying everything right. I had to be credible, you know 'even to myself in the moment.

After spending two years at Wilfrid Laurier University studying journalism, I returned home and transferred to Humber College. That is where my experience truly lifted off. I joined Rogers TV and commentated soccer games. I became a co-editor of a magazine called 'SWEAT'. I studied sports journalism in Cheltenham, UK on exchange at the University of Gloucestershire and I joined Sportsnet 590 The Fan as an intern.

Everything I had strived for finally led to this. The start of what I had always wanted. But now, this chapter is coming to an end, after three years of serving your community.

I have had the pleasure of interviewing professional athletes from a wide range of leagues throughout my time. From the OJHL, NHL, AHL, MLS, CPL, NCAA, Olympics, different Formula divisions and other pro leagues around the planet, I have spoken to many players that have come from your community in an effort to showcase to these professionals, on what it means to come from a town that cherishes and loves them.

And of course, it isn't just about them. I have had the pleasure of interviewing young up and coming athletes trying to make a name for themselves. Young high schoolers aspiring to be something great. Young children who have won tournament donning their town's colours. Former volunteers that dedicated years of free service to ensure that local leagues run smoothly.

I take pride in also being a part of that process and being a part of sharing these people's stories with your town. Because they are all deserving of having that exposure and recognition even if they might not see it that way. That was my job. It was about making other people great and I had the honour and the privilege of doing that.

Every single week, these articles would be published and distributed to 49,500 readers across all three townships. To me, this is something I will always cherish in my life. It is something I will never let go of.

But as I now move on 'to a completely different career, in fact 'as your sports and general interest reporter for one final time, I'd

like to take a moment to thank each and every one of you. Thank you, to you, the citizens, who have supported this local newspaper and continue to do so. Without you, this newspaper would not be anywhere.

Thank you goes out, to each and every one of you that have supported me, believed in me over and trusted me these last three years. You have helped me in this journey and many of you from this journey, I can now call my friends.

And thank you, to my editors Mark Pavilons, Brock Weir and former editor Mike Baker, and to everyone at London Publishing Corporation for taking a chance on me and for believing in me from the very beginning.

Although my name might pop up in the near future in some freelance work, of course that is not nearly the same.

Robert Belardi, sounding off. Ciao.