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Broadcast 101

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How to Become a Sportscaster: Insight from Gina Miller

“How To Become a Sportscaster: Insight from Gina Miller.” WorkInSportscom Sports Career Blog, www.workinsports.com/blog/how-to-become-a-sportscaster-gina-miller/.

After reading, the article, “*How to Become a Sports Broadcaster: Insight from Gina Miller,*” I learned about what it is like trying to break into the sports broadcasting world, from a woman’s point of view. Something that I learned and can apply to my journey is that I need to make sure that I’m aware of everything in front and behind the camera, because ultimately a successful telecast is the result of cohesive efforts from the entire media team.

The career field that utilizes the skills and interests that I want to pursue is sports broadcast. A sports broadcaster is someone who analyzes, commentates, and interviews, athletes, coaches, and teams. Sports broadcasters, specifically women, primarily analyze highlights, athletes, and present discussion topics to a panel of male sports broadcasters. Along with that, female sports broadcasters partake in sideline pre and post game interviews. The life of an NFL sports broadcaster is hectic one, it is an everyday job, that includes a vast amount of traveling.

Typically on a weekly basis, Monday- Wednesday is spent researching and preparing for upcoming events. During this time, broadcasters contact coaches and players to gather information about their upcoming competition. Along with that, they spend time researching the two competitors or teams by watching recent, previous games, and reading local newspapers in order to keep tabs on the latest and greatest information regarding the event. Wednesday's are havoc due to traveling to the Thursday night destination, while trying to complete the finishing touches on their prep work. Thursday's consist of arriving to the event and interacting with the players and coaches before the event. During the competition, broadcasters note their observations and prepare questions to ask after the event. After a long night, the following morning will take place on an airplane. Post landing, the broadcaster will begin to prepare for Sunday's kickoff. During this time, the broadcaster gets a chance to speak with the home team's head coach, coordinators, and players, as well as, the announcers and game analyst. Saturday is spent preparing for Sunday's big game. The day of kickoff, broadcasters report to the stadium early, to interact and gather information from the players. During the game, the broadcasters work with the announcers, producers, and analyst by relaying information to one another, in order to get the information out to the public.

The training, education, and certification required to become a sports broadcaster for a big network, truly depends on the individual. For example, Troy Aikman, a former Super Bowl champion and Quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys, is currently a sports commentator for FOX. Aikman left the University of California- Los Angeles, without a degree, in order to pursue a professional football career. Although, Aikman's education did not play a role in assisting him to his current job, his credibility, knowledge, reputation, and accomplishments outweigh his

educational background. However, for most individuals, completing a bachelor's in broadcast, journalism, or telecommunications is typically the way to go. During the midst of completing their degree, aspiring broadcasters complete local internships in order to gain experience and network their way into the field. Having an athletic background, typically helps sports broadcasters make a name for themselves in the sports world. Personally, I hope to receive a track and field scholarship to the University of Southern California, because the university is known for its Annenberg School for Communication. USC is ranked number five on USA Today's list of "Top 10 schools for journalism in the U.S," as well as, a great track program. Additionally, the campus is located about 30 minutes away from the NFL Network Headquarters, located in Culver City, California. Within the broadcasting industry, specifically sports, the average salary is \$500,000- \$2,000,000, however it is only obtainable by broadcasters who get on with major sport networks, such as, FOX sports, ESPN, CBS Sports, NFL Network, and NBC Sports. The median salary of an average sports broadcaster, coming out of college and working their way up the food chain ranges from \$18,000- \$75,000.

The future for sports broadcast is full of enlightenment. As athletes and coaches, retire, the new generation of athletes and coaches will bring more knowledge and talent to the sports world, due to the advancements in technology, and the detail that goes into the development of athletes. As a result, sports broadcasters will have more to report about and more to cover during live competitions. In regards to terminology, sports broadcasters terminology differs depending on the sport they're covering. For example, a broadcaster covering football would be familiar with, phrases such as, Cover 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, which are different defensive coverages used by NFL teams in order to stop the offense from moving the ball down the field.

Often, the media reflects the changes happening in the world. Nowadays, women and minorities are starting to gain more popularity within the broadcasting industry. On screen diversity attracts more viewers, because the audience can connect with who they are watching on their television screen. Along with that, over the years, social media has heavily influenced the world and the way we see it. Currently, major sport networks such as NFL Network, CBS Sports, NBC Sports, ESPN, and FOX Sports, interact with their audience via social media. This allows fans to stay up to date with the latest gossip, and keeps them feening for more information, inevitably giving that specific network more and more views.

After absorbing the content gathered from my research, I feel very confident about my ISM journey and my ability to successfully utilize the skills I've learned throughout my journey thus far.

Annotated Article

Becoming a sportscaster is a journey you are **meant to struggle on.**

As society has become more and more dependent on just add water solutions and quick fixes, the fact remains there is no fast pass to [sportscaster stardom](#). Ask any seasoned sportscaster for advice and expect to hear phrases like: start small, work hard, make mistakes and grow.

“I hear so many young people say they want to start their on-camera career in a market like Dallas or Houston. No you don’t!” says [Gina Miller](#), 17-year sportscaster and founder of [That Sports Girl Media](#).

“The talent in top markets have years of experience, are polished and understand nuanced ways of storytelling that most 22-year-olds just can’t command. The expectation level in those markets is also much higher and there is little room for error.

“Small market experiences and mistakes are your friend.”

After almost 15 years working on camera in Dallas, a top five market, Miller recently decided to leave CBS11 & TXA21 to focus primarily on her multimedia business. We caught her at just the right time, ready to share her knowledge with truth as her only goal.

Miller’s ideas about getting started on camera, what skills you need to learn, who to appreciate and what it’s like to be a female sportscaster are better than any Masters class you could take.

So read on and learn from a true pro how to become a sportscaster:

Most people take for granted how hard it is to become a sportscaster – to launch your on camera career you traveled far – can you describe the early parts of your on camera journey?

Miller: While I was working as a [production assistant](#) in the sports department at KHOU-TV my senior year at University of Houston, I made it a point to send out five resume tapes a week.

These were the pre-YouTube and pre-DVD days.

Each tape cost \$3.76 to send so it cost me about \$75 bucks a month. Unfortunately, most of what I received in return was simply rejection letters. Except for a few stations.

The intriguing offer came from Guam. Yes, the small island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. KUAM-TV made me an offer to be its [Sports Director](#), a position for which I was way in over my head. I leapt at the chance rationalizing that I would likely never get the opportunity to work halfway around the world in a tropical paradise.

At the time, it was hard. I went from one of the most technically advanced stations in the country to a small-market station on a remote island that didn't have nearly the bells and whistles. In hindsight it was the perfect opportunity. I was on air for about 24 minutes a day, **making mistakes, refining my craft, learning how to shoot and edit with sub-par equipment** (which they have since completely overhauled, btw. KUAM is a fabulous station).

It was the ultimate on the job training experience.

If someone, maybe an intern, came up to you today and said, "Can you teach me how to become a sportscaster?" what's the best advice you could give them?

Three things:

1 – Learn what goes on OFF-CAMERA, as well. So many interns I meet feel like all they need to do is step in front of camera and POOF magic happens. Hardly. Doing a great job on-camera is a collaborative effort. You must work in conjunction with your photographer to ensure the overall product is successful. (more on that in a bit)

If you are in studio there is an entire team of individuals working behind the scenes to make sure things run smoothly. **I learned how to shoot in the field, run tape, run a teleprompter, run camera, even direct with a basic board. It's important to have an understanding of what others do so that you empathize when things go wrong** (and they will). Also, if things do go wrong, you can help find a solution.

2 – Practice. Practice. Practice. Stand in front of a mirror, holding a brush or can of hair spray to mimic a microphone. Record yourself on your computer or iPad doing a standup. Get in the habit of turning a quick 7-8 second standup. You need to learn how to talk, breathe and gesture on-camera so that it all looks natural. It's not as easy as it looks and it takes practice.

3 – Take care of your [photographer](#). Without him or her, you are not on-camera. Make sure they have water, carry the tripod and communicate with them on story ideas. It's a team effort and your photog is an essential part of the team.

You've covered the Cowboys for some time now, and will continue to host "Cowboys Special Edition", take us through what a "normal" game day is like for you.

Miller: The days can be routine but the stories rarely are.

If I am involved in any sort of pre-game show, like I was for the better part of decade, NFL Sundays began around 7am. I co-hosted a Cowboys pre-game show that required me onsite and ready to roll between 8:30-9am.

Once the pre-game show ended, depending on the time of kickoff, we wait for the game to start, either noon, 3pm or a night game.

During the game, this is where a big misconception lies, we are not cheering or drinking. We are watching with a critical eye to determine what the key plays, storylines and defining moments of the game are so that we can be prepared to ask questions and discuss them after the game.

Once the game ends, we are in the locker room or press conference room, gathering material (soundbites) for our postgame coverage. This is usually about an hour or hour and a half.

Once that is done and our standups are recorded, we head back to the station or edit on site to produce material for a Sunday night show.

At times we do postgame shows right outside the Cowboys locker room. This involves getting players or, many times, Jerry Jones to join us live to discuss what happened during the game. These are always long days, 12-14 hours at least.

Do you find there are still higher hurdles for women in the sports industry, especially as it relates to reporting sports, or have we finally gotten to a point where people are judged purely on their abilities?

Miller: Initially, there was a lot of "Gina is a female sportscaster" talk. This was early in my career in the 90's. Now I don't think that it is as much of an issue, although a CEO of Fortune 500 company recently asked me what it's like being a female in my industry.

Now, I LIKE to believe that we are judged solely on our abilities but I do still get email about clothing, hair and makeup. I have also experienced a situation where a male colleague and I went on the air making the exact same mistake. I received a fair amount of response. He didn't receive any. Sometimes I feel that when a women in this industry makes a mistake, it can be magnified.

In my situation, though, I don't focus on the gender aspect of what I do. I simply focus on doing the best job I can.

Like me, you began your sports television career before social media was around – how much has journalism changed since before social media? Do you think it is better now or worse?

Miller: In some ways it's better, in others it is worse. Social media has certainly led to the democratization of reporting. Anyone can "report" a story now. That has power and, many times, can be a good thing. But the drawback comes when someone who doesn't follow the best journalism practices takes to a medium like Twitter to start reporting something as fact without truly vetting out the story.

As a reporter, my duty to report a story is to get details and facts from both sides and consider the information

I love how [social media allows you to engage with people](#) in ways we never before had and connect with individuals around the world. It's also great insight into a person's personality. I love it for that.

It's also outstanding in a breaking news environment when the right people are breaking the news. When individuals are just irresponsibly throwing out information they do not know to be correct, it's a detriment to our industry.

Tell us about your new venture, That Sports Girl Media:

Miller: I am thrilled about my new endeavor, [That Sports Girl Media](#). So many companies and brands are looking for unique and creative ways to connect with and engage their core consumers and clients.

That Sports Girl Media can help.

We provide media content ranging from blog posts to full-scale video features to help a company tell a story that resonates in a crowded digital marketplace. We also assist with content curation, social media strategy, pitch consulting and more.

