

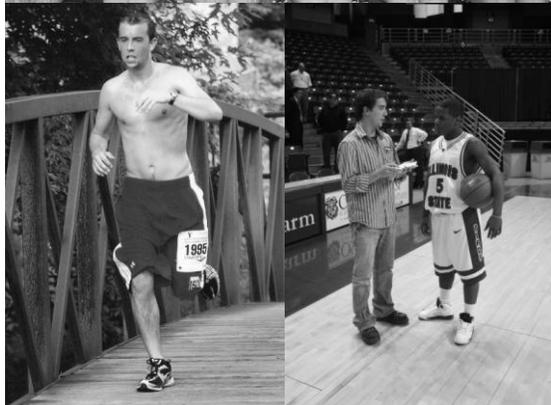
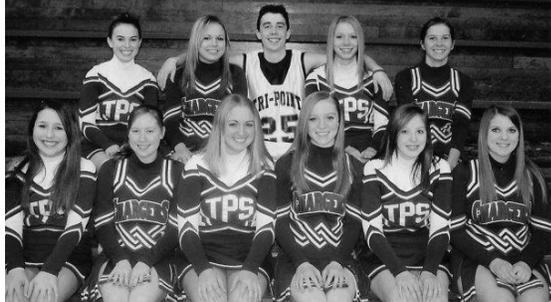
# Scott Martin Gleeson



I remember coming home from practices and feeling helpless. On game nights, I cried myself to sleep. Sitting on the bench in 7th grade hoops felt like the worst pain of my life. I made a promise to myself to never experience that heartache again, starting at point guard in 8th grade the following season, then starting JV and varsity in high school. I used to work out eight hours a day on my game, knowing that “hard work beats talent when talent doesn’t work hard.” I’ve carried that passage of perseverance with me as I’ve grown older into the workforce. I have a constant chip on my shoulder: I bring the same passion and work ethic I had on the hardwood, to the newsroom.

I feel blessed to have known what I wanted to do with my life since the first time I saw Derrick Rose play for Chicago Simeon in high school. He was a sophomore...I was a sophomore. He had just thrown down a windmill dunk that would have made SportsCenter’s Top 10 had ESPN been in attendance. Me, well, I had just received an A on my English paper that took me 20 minutes to write. That’s when I realized my basketball playing career would be short-lived. Enter the world of journalism, a world that doesn’t necessarily offer the big paycheck but rather the internal payoff. I love everything about the business from the free hot dogs at ball games to the idiot who irrationally comments on my stories. No failing economy will persuade me to think otherwise.

In high school, I would deliver my very own hand-crafted newspaper/magazine titled, “Baller,” to family and friends. From there, I was able to launch a professional sports journalism career in the newspaper industry—first with the *Pontiac Daily Leader* and then with the *Kankakee Daily Journal*. We all start somewhere. I started with two newspapers I grew up reading. Both were lower circulated papers, but I was literally thrown into the fire as I was given a byline to cover a multitude of events ranging from 4-H Fairs to the Chicago Bears Training Camp.



At Illinois State, I was known as a juggling artist for my dedications to various organizations—my school newspaper duties, officiating recreation sports, organizing a basketball camp, coaching middle-school kids, high school football stringing reporting, 15 credits of class, and when there was time, my social life. My heart will forever be tied to the Midwest and that's due to my allegiance to the 'Birds. I'll bleed Redbird red for the rest of my life.

None of my college experience would have been what it was without the tremendous opportunities I had in four years working for the *Daily Vidette*, the university's student newspaper. As an only child, I've always been the family-type. Some people find family in college through a sorority or a fraternity. I found it with my co-workers as they became my best friends for life.

While my professional career took off at smaller newspapers, I had the chance to take my sportswriting career to new heights at a major-college newspaper. I had my dream job as a three-year *Vidette* sports editor in a schedule that pushed me to the brink of 60-hour weeks (to go with a full course load). Looking back, I wouldn't trade any of it for the world because I was doing what I loved. I served as the beat writer for ISU's football and basketball teams, which provided enough memories through nail-biter games and crazy road trips, to last a lifetime.

I still remember getting the call from *USA TODAY* that eventually led to a chance-of-a-lifetime internship in the sports department. It gives me chills down my spine. And just as easily, I remember my first big byline—typing my name, followed by "*USA TODAY*." As a kid who grew up in a town of 500 people (shout out Cullom, Illinois), having my stories read by 2 million people was a surreal feeling.

I'm a firm believer in the notion that everything happens for a reason and the path that led me to the Washington DC area is a true testament of that. When my parents moved from Illinois to Northern Virginia during my freshman year of college, it flipped my life upside down. Three short years later, and I was reacquainted with my parents in the most unexpected scenario—commuting a short 30 minutes to *USA TODAY*'s headquarters during my senior year.

And ultimately following my college graduation, the District felt like home. While I'm far away from the Hoosiers-like gym that I played high school basketball games in, those jump shots at the crack of dawn are engraved in me forever. I went from writing and then delivering hand-crafted copies of my own newspaper, to writing for the biggest one. In my time as a young journalist, I've had the opportunity to interview Mike Krzyzewski, Joe Paterno, Brett Favre, LeBron James, and members of the Chicago Bulls, Bears and Blackhawks.

Nowadays, I'm a marathon runner in my spare time and family remains my No. 1 priority. I'm continuing to progress my career with the never-satisfied attitude that has defined me. I'm glad I never started in 7th grade...that's for damn sure.