

John Affleck

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Summary

I've enjoyed a successful, 30-year career in journalism, the majority of it as a practicing reporter and editor with The Associated Press and, since 2013, as the director of Penn State's sports journalism program, one of the best of its kind in the country. My interests are not limited to sports but a primary focus is making my students better communicators while using sports – both inside and outside the lines – as the topic of their work. I have been a leader and valued team member in all of my job settings.

Professional Experience

Pennsylvania State University (2013-2017)

- Knight Chair in Sports Journalism and Society. Director of the John Curley Center for Sports Journalism.

I shape Penn State's academic program for aspiring sports journalists, with more than 100 students on their way to earning an academic certificate at any given time. The center emphasizes not just traditional reporting skills but also mastery of social media, reporting on off-the-field issues, and in-depth enterprise. My aim is to develop students who think critically, communicate effectively and are prepared to take over as leaders in the world of sports journalists, whatever the medium. The whole Bellisario College of Communications emphasizes practical experience and engaged scholarship; that is, putting students into real-life situations where they can develop their skills and work with professional partners. I fully support this approach, and have pushed the boundaries of what our students can achieve.

During my tenure, the Curley Center has worked successfully with professional partners including The Associated Press, the USA Today Sports Network, the Miami Herald, and the Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association. We have covered Penn State football in Ireland (2014); NASCAR at Pocono Raceway (2015); Penn State baseball in Cuba (2015); the Super Bowl (2014, 2016); the men's golf U.S. Open (2016); the Rio Paralympics (2016); the Pittsburgh Pirates home opener (2017); the Little League World Series (2017) and, the NFL in London (2017).

In addition to providing such special, off-campus experiences, I emphasize practical

skills in the classroom such as reporting, writing and interviewing, and work with several students each year on independent study projects, always with an eye toward getting published. My teacher evaluations have been consistently stellar (with an average overall rating higher than 6.6 out of 7) and I won the college's student-nominated Excellence in Teaching Award in 2015.

My mission also involves examining issues within sports that cross over into a broader societal context, which dovetails nicely with what I see as a vital skill for sports journalists; that is, understanding the power structure that supports the sports industry. A class I developed on covering the business of sports revolves around answering the question, "Who gets paid?" as a clarifying starting point.

I serve on multiple committees within the college, and recently chaired a committee that drafted a strategic plan for the Penn State Journalism Department. I also am on the executive committee of Penn State's new Center for the Study of Sports in Society, a cross-campus, multi-disciplinary effort. It's also my pleasure to serve as the faculty advisor to the Penn State chapter of the Association for Women in Sports Media, and to the Penn State track and field team, both men and women.

Beyond the university, I have taken advantage of my mission to comment regularly on sports media and outside-the-lines sports topics such as: the dearth of coverage for elite, disabled athletes; the impact on pro football of daily fantasy sports; how the coverage of gay and lesbian athletes has changed over time; and, baseball as a diplomatic tool between the U.S. and Cuba. Last week, I spoke at a workshop on interviewing athletes about sensitive subjects at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland.

Finally, an online publisher, Great Jones Street, purchased and published on Kindle and other e-readers a collection of my short stories, "Winning and Losing," most of which have something to do with the way sports impact our lives.

The Associated Press (1991-2013)

- **Sports Enterprise Editor / Interim Deputy Editor**, New York, NY (2008-2013). Brought on to improve sports enterprise and my role grew steadily from there. Eventually became one of two managers running day-to-day sports operations, from major stories to routine daily sports coverage for a department of about 70 reporters. Key accomplishments: directed coverage of the Lance Armstrong saga, resulting in several major breaks for the AP; coordinated coverage of Jerry Sandusky case with news department; ran the domestic sports report in July and August 2012 while the department was split between Olympic and non-Olympic coverage; directed college football coverage, 2008-12; directed Final Four coverage, 2013.
- **Editor, National Reporting Team**, New York, NY (2001-2008). Responsible for leading a dynamic group of seven national reporters with broad topical beats such as religion, race, family and state government. The team broke spot news and produced long-form enterprise. Key accomplishments: Built up the team and turned it into a

prolific, award-winning force in the AP's daily national news report. Led 50-state, yearlong investigative project on sexually abusive teachers, which inspired legislation in eight states and new laws in at least two that made it tougher for teachers with a record of abuse to get back into the classroom.

- **Correspondent**, Cleveland, OH (1997-2001) Reporter/manager responsible for leading seven-person bureau covering Northeast Ohio. Key stories and assignments: Wrongful imprisonment lawsuit in the Sam Sheppard case, the true crime story that partly inspired “The Fugitive”; supervised sports writer and directed coverage of the return of the Cleveland Browns’ return to the NFL; contributed spot and feature coverage of Cleveland Indians during their 1990s run of success, including trip to 1997 World Series; and, game coverage of Cleveland Cavaliers.
- **Correspondent**, Buffalo, N.Y. (1995-97) Reporter/manager responsible for leading the AP's three-person bureau in western New York and, occasionally, southern Ontario. Coverage of spot news, sports, business, features. Key stories and assignments: A popular enterprise piece was a story on the difference between the way Canadians and Americans have viewed and used Niagara Falls; supervised sports writer and also helped with practice and game coverage of Bills, Sabres, college basketball.
- **Newsman**, Albany, N.Y. (1991-95) Reporter, copy editor in the AP's main Upstate New York bureau. Key stories and assignments: Earned a spot covering the New York legislature and Gov. Mario Cuomo's administration; spot coverage of a wave of mail bombings around Christmas 1993; routinely edited sports copy with occasional spot assignments, such as Army football and the state high school basketball tournament.
- **Special assignments**, meaning outside my normal duties.
 - **News**: Presidential election, Florida (2000); Media recount of presidential election (2001); Death of Pope John Paul II (2005, editing in New York); Iraq War coverage in Baghdad (2008); Arab Spring, Cairo (2011); Hurricane Sandy (2012); Election 2012 (declared the winner in every statewide and state legislative race in the Dakotas).
 - **Sports**: World Series (1997); Summer Olympics (2000, 2004); World Cup (2010); BCS college football championship game (2009-13); Men's Final Four (2013).

Early career (1985-89): Intern at *The Citizen* of Auburn, N.Y., and the *South Bend Tribune* (Indiana). Full-time reporting jobs: *Finger Lakes Times* of Geneva, N.Y., and *The Sun* of LaGrange, Ill.

Education

University of Notre Dame, bachelor's degree in American Studies, with honors, 1986.

University of Dundee (Scotland), postgraduate diploma in 20th century English literature, with distinction, 1987.

Northwestern University, master's degree in journalism, concentration in newspaper administration, perfect 4.0 GPA, awarded 1991. Kappa Tau Alpha.

Awards

A sampling of honors either I or students under my direct guidance have earned:

To me:

- Won the Excellence in Teaching Award from the College of Communications' Alumni Society Board, 2015.

To my students:

- Jim Murray Memorial Foundation Scholarship, \$5,000 scholarship for opinion writing on sports. National competition with more than 30 schools participating. Our students won in both 2015 (Garrett Ross) and 2016 (Erin McCarthy).
- Keystone Student Press Awards, first place, sports writing, 2017 (McCarthy).
- Hearst Journalism Awards Program. National competition, sometimes called the Pulitzers of college journalism. Sports writing: second place, 2015 (John Stuetz); third and fourth place, 2017 (Ross and McCarthy), no school had a better combined score than Penn State this year. Schools are allowed two entries, none of the other 68 schools topped our third and fourth place; 2018 fourth place (Matt Martell), 15th place (Mark Fischer).
- Society of Professional Journalists. Mark of Excellence, Region 1 (Northeast US). Sports writing: First place, 2017. (Anna Pitingolo). First place, 2018 (Jack Dougherty).
- We also have won several photography honors, though I don't edit the photos so my impact was only in bringing the students onto projects.

A sampling of the awards either I or my reporters earned at The Associated Press.

To me:

- Association of Capitol Reporters and Editors, 2003. One of several AP reporters and editors to win first place award for a series called "Tough Times, Tough Choices" about the economic recession of that period.
- Ohio AP Staffer of the Year, 1999-2000. First time the award was given. Picked from a staff of about 30.

To my news reporters:

- National Education Writers Association, 2008, Hechinger Grand Prize, Teacher Sex Abuse series. Top award in a contest with hundreds of entries. To National Writers Robert Tanner and Martha Irvine. The series later won the Associated Press Managing

Editors Award for Enterprise, its top award for enterprise/investigative work. Impacted legislation in several states regarding teachers found to have sexually abused students.

- National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association. 2008, Journalist of the Year, to National Writer Martha Irvine.
- Columbia University's Let's Do It Better, 2008, winning reporters invited to a workshop on covering racial issues, to National Writer Erin Texeira for "Men Surviving Blackness."
- Religion Communicators Council (first place) and Religion Newswriters Association (finalist), 2007 to religion writers Rachel Zoll and Brian Murphy, for a series called "The New Missionaries" about Christian denominations turning to the developing world for ministers because of the lack of vocations.

To my sports reporters:

- Awards in 2013 included National Headliners, sports writing, to Jim Vertuno for his coverage of the Lance Armstrong case; and, the Lisagor Award in sports writing from the Chicago Headline Club for "The Hardest Hit" an enterprise piece accompanied by compelling video on the NFL's culture of disregard for injuries. I directed the project, which came from an idea I suggested.
- Associated Press Sports Editors, a contest of AP work judged by newspaper sports editors, 2012. Five of the six stories to earn recognition in the enterprise and feature categories were projects that I oversaw, including both winners.

Publications and notable interviews while at Penn State

For The Conversation

The Conversation is a website an independent source of news and views from the academic and research community, delivered direct to the public. Penn State is a funding partner.

I have authored 11 articles on sports-related topics, with more than 150,000 total readers. As of Oct. 11, I am the most widely read Penn State journalism instructor on the website, and 10th among all Penn State faculty authors, out of 136.

A list of my *Conversation* articles:

Affleck, John. Off the mat: boxing's triumphant (if brief) return in Mayweather-Pacquiao bout. *The Conversation*. May 1, 2015.

Affleck, John. FIFA prosecution is worth it, even if the big fish get away. *The Conversation*. May 28, 2015.

Affleck, John. Sepp Blatter's FIFA exit opens door for prosecutors, reformers. *The Conversation*. June 2, 2015.

Affleck, John. Salazar, Armstrong and the role journalists play policing sports. *The Conversation*. June 18, 2015.

Affleck, John. In today's NFL, forget Super Bowl dreams – it's all about fantasy. *The Conversation*. Sept. 11, 2015

Affleck, John. Sports history shows why playing ball with Cuba makes sense. *The Conversation*. Dec. 15, 2015.

Affleck, John. If football is deadly, why do we still watch? *The Conversation*. Feb. 5, 2016.

Affleck, John. March Madness means money – it's time to talk about who's getting paid. *The Conversation*. March 14, 2016.

Affleck, John. Don't run (and don't laugh): The little-known history of racewalking. *The Conversation*. Aug. 16, 2016.

Affleck, John. Why do the Paralympics get so little attention in the United States? *The Conversation*. Sept. 15, 2016.

Affleck, John. What happened to the openly gay athlete? *The Conversation*. June 21, 2017.

For newspapers and other publications

Affleck, John. Words matter, even in sports. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Nov. 29, 2013.

Affleck, John. Pigskin problem: Coaches admit they can't do their jobs. *PennLive.com*. Dec. 16, 2013.

Affleck, John. The lesson in MLB vs. NFL is the lesson in business: innovation is key. *PennLive.com*. March 27, 2014.

Affleck, John. I believe that we are a soccer nation. *PennLive.com*. June 30, 2014.

Affleck, John. 2015: An almost great year in sports. *Centre Daily Times*. Dec. 24, 2015.

Affleck, John. New Ball Game: Covering Sports with Teams as Competitors. *Global Corruption Report: Sport*. Transparency International. February, 2016. pp. 352-358.

Under freelance contract, researched and contributed copy to Harvard University's *Protecting and Promoting the Health of NFL Players: Legal and Ethical Analysis and Recommendations*. November, 2016. Cited on page 372, with name misspelled.

Affleck, John. Here's who will really win the Mayweather-McGregor fight. *Fortune*. Aug. 19, 2017.

Affleck, John. Why can't the NCAA get its act together? *Fortune*. Oct. 31, 2017

Affleck, John. College football solution: Add one round, cut one regular-season game. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Jan. 4, 2018.

Affleck, John. Why winning the Super Bowl won't boost your city's economy. *Fortune*. Jan. 26, 2017.

Affleck, John. How the FBI's investigation could change college sports as we know them. *Fortune*. March 8, 2018.

Fiction

Affleck, John. *Winning and Losing*. A short story collection e-published by Great Jones Street. 2016.

Film

Quiet Sundays. Short sports documentary. Made by students / faculty over the 2017-18 school year. Just finished post production at this writing. Roles: instructor of record; faculty producer.

Interviews

I am typically interviewed several times a year regarding various sports issues and projects. A few highlights:

Interviewed several times on WESA's *Essential Pittsburgh* from 2013-2016.

Interviewed for NPR's *Only a Game* episode of Dec. 19, 2015, re. Cuban baseball.

Interviewed for the following article: Frank Fitzpatrick. Sports studies at college are hitting home runs. *Philly.com*. May 10, 2017.

On-campus Service

Faculty adviser, Association for Women in Sports Media, Penn State chapter. Since 2014, I have mentored our aspiring female sports communicators and led the group on trips to AWSM's annual convention from 2014-2016.

Faculty partner, Penn State track and field. Since 2015, I have served as the mentor and first fan to the Nittany Lions' men's and women's track teams, attending practices and home meets regularly, acting as a listener and source of support to the student-athletes. I have twice traveled with the team to away meets. I take no credit but am happy to say the Lions have won the Big Ten title in indoor track (women) and outdoor track (men) during my tenure.

Personal

Running

A lifelong runner, highlights of my athletic career include: six high school MVP awards (Bishop Ludden High School of Syracuse, NY) in the running sports; earning a colour (British equivalent of a varsity letter) at the University of Dundee for the school harriers; top 500 finisher at Boston Marathon (3 hours, 3 minutes net time) in 1999; nationally ranked by masterstrack.com in 2005 in four events (800 meters, 1500 meters, 3000 meters and the mile); master's All-American in the mile, having run sub-4:50 at age 40; anchored masters 50-and-over team that set Central Park Track Club record in the 4 x 400 meters while competing at Penn Relays in 2017; have entered and completed four sprint triathlons.

As a coach/volunteer in the running community: certified track and field coach by USATF, the sport's governing body; member of Central Park Track Club since 2001 and have served as an assistant coach, board member and member of fundraising committee.

Notable

Grew up in Syracuse, N.Y. ... learned to play guitar as an adult ... expert on the Beatles but prefer the Rolling Stones ... was pied in the face by Penn State COMM students last spring for charity ... have written and edited professionally on six continents, only missing Antarctica.