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Headlines: Assistant Athletic Director Sarah Higgins imparts the value of storytelling to PA student journalists

Subheading: how various forms of media can inspire

On April 3, student journalists across Pennsylvania convened in the Happy Valley for the PSPA State Finals. Despite the gray skies and cold winds outdoors, the hall was aglow with conversation as students reached further to the edge of their seats to hear guest speaker, Sarah Higgins. A graduate from Temple University with a degree in journalism and a masters in film from Arizona State University, Sarah Higgins holds an impressive resume from writing for UK's top golf magazine to working in media and creative content for the Olympics and Notre Dame University. ^{As of April 2023} Higgins assumed the role of Assistant Athletic Director at Penn State leading creative content and branding. Though the medium in which she works has changed over the years, one aspect remains the same - the power of storytelling that is ubiquitous throughout all forms of journalism.

"My biggest learning in my career... is storytelling can take a number of different forms," Higgins said. "Storytelling can come through details on a uniform. Storytelling can come through video."

As Assistant Athletic Director, Higgins oversees various areas - photography, social media, apparel - but the main way she maintains consistency is ensuring that each

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medium tells the story of Penn State and its athletes - all its athletes.

"One of my big charges is equity," Higgins said. "there's no reason that [an athlete] in golf or tennis or gymnastics or field hockey shouldn't feel as special."

Every one of the 31 sports representing Penn State is given the same assets and media coverage to tell their story - not only who they are on the court or field, but who they are as people. Higgins explained how crucial it is that all student athletes are humanized - that they are more than just a number or statistic. Multiple forms of media allow their story to reach a multitude of audiences.

"one [student] we really focused on was ^{what??} Olumuyiwa Fashanu - his ^{Any context} one of our linemen." Higgins said. "we really focused on telling the story of Olumuyiwa's family and showcasing what kind of student he is. So we followed him to class, interviewed his parents, did a 4-minute feature video."

In an era when many fear the death of print journalism,

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Higgins is a beacon of light inspiring others to adapt and consider new avenues for continuing to tell the stories that connect humans to one another.

As she moved from her roots in journalism to alternative medium, the realization ^{dawned on her} that the heart of journalism and storytelling is unchanging regardless of the format and that various formats encourage greater communication rather than inhibit it. After hearing the stories of her career in journalism, student journalists are left with a greater understanding of how journalism brings to life the stories of others whether that be in photos, videos, or social media posts.

"[Social media] is critical. It's vital. And that's how we connect with our audience." Higgins said. "I just fell in love with content - telling stories in any way I could. I realized that was why I loved storytelling."