

Sports journalist K.C. Johnson talks Bulls at Lit Fest

Johnson brings charisma, knowledge to discussion on sports and literature

by Grant Feldman

For the second year in a row, well-known Chicago Bulls journalist K.C. Johnson spoke at the New Trier Literary Festival.

This year marked the 16th annual Lit Fest, where students in senior writing classes participate in workshops and listen to speakers.

An Evanston native, Johnson was the Bulls beat writer at the Chicago Tribune for 29 years before joining NBC Sports Chicago this fall.

His talk encapsulated his journey from playing basketball at ETHS and Beloit College to becoming the Bulls Insider for NBC's website and TV station. He gave students first-hand insight into the world of professional sports and journalism.

"My favorite part of journalism is you never know what will happen every day," said Johnson. "The day [former Bulls point guard] Jay Williams crashed his motorcycle [resulting in a leg injury which nearly required amputation], I was out having dinner. Things can change so quickly, and that's what makes it so exciting."

Johnson also enjoys the opportunity to travel across the nation to NBA games, and around the



Johnson touched on a range of subjects, from his upbringing to his current position at NBC Sports | Feldman

globe to events such as the Olympics. He emphasized the importance of forming relationships in the sports journalism field, where connections can make or break a career.

"Journalism lets you meet people and relate to them through life experiences," said Johnson. "[Bulls guard Tomáš Satoransky] is from the Czech Republic, and when I was in Europe I visited near there. So I could use that as a jumping off point when I first talked to him... when you have a good relationship with people

you cover, you get information they won't tell anybody else."

Johnson elaborated on some of his most memorable experiences, like the time he went to White Hall, Alabama to write a story on Ben Wallace, who had just signed a \$60 million deal with the Bulls in 2006. White Hall was in one of the poorest counties in the U.S. at the time, and Johnson expected to write a feel-good story on Wallace's rise from being raised by a single mother with his 11 siblings to the NBA. He was

surprised, though, when a portion of the town spoke of Wallace's neglect after he made it out.

"I went in with the idea of a rags-to-riches story, but there was a very strong undercurrent that people were angry with him — he didn't give back to the community enough. Ben tried to buy his family homes elsewhere, and they didn't want to move," said Johnson.

Johnson's deep investment in that story led him to some unique encounters, such as the time he

drank moonshine with a man who marched alongside Martin Luther King, Jr., and meeting Wallace's near-identical brother while visiting his childhood home.

"You go where the story takes you," said Johnson. "As a reporter you gotta trust your instincts. That comes with experience — your writing voice develops over time. Make sure you don't have an agenda or bias, and be open to new information. I met Ben's whole family before I met him, and he didn't like me at first. He said, 'you're the guy who wrote that story,' but now we have a really good relationship... it's really fun to sit down with somebody and get information. I love putting research into developing good thoughts and ideas, which all goes back to writing and letting the interview go off to areas you would not expect."

As for his parting thoughts, Johnson left the audience with career advice that extends beyond sports journalism.

"The biggest thing I learned was getting comfortable in my own skin. Early in my career I interviewed Michael Jordan, and I thought to myself, 'Oh my God, I'm interviewing Michael Jordan!' Over the years I've gotten comfortable with my voice by watching a lot of people interview on TV and putting a lot of work in to be prepared for interviews. I love interviewing and writing, which is a good combination for being a sportswriter."

I'm not just: a New Trier student

Senior is not only a student but also an entrepreneur

by Nadia Jaikaran

At New Trier, many students face the issue of balancing academics and extracurriculars. For some, academics takes up a significant percentage of their day, resulting in less time to participate in activities students may be passionate about.

For senior and WNTH host Andrew Moerschel, balancing academics and extracurriculars is tricky, but results in a worthwhile outcome.

Many Americans perceive radio as an outlet for entertainment and news, but for Moerschel, it travels deeper.

"Radio embodies the birth of modern media that dominates pop culture today," he began, "its emphasis on the spoken word, its immediacy in everyday life and the ability to send information to an audience that can stretch from coast to coast has been a major source of inspiration in my constant drive to become a better communicator."

Another source of inspiration for Moerschel stemmed from radio's power to bring people of different backgrounds together. To move beyond WNTH, Moerschel landed various gigs on his way towards pursuing his dream.

"I've interned with WCGO 1590AM and 95.9FM, and [now] I've been hired to produce three programs as a Multimedia Producer. As of June 2019, I was hired as an audio producer for the nationally-syndicated political talk program Beyond the Beltway with Bruce DuMont."

While work life and academics take up a large portion of Moerschel's time, he admits it can be difficult.



Moerschel's passion for radio has landed him spots | andrewmoerschel.com

"One of the largest costs of starting a career is losing time and will-power to reconnect with those I love," he said.

He emphasizes the importance of taking up hobbies outside of work-related passions.

"It has become a dedicated activity of mine to assemble a full-service, multi-faceted brewing station [for my tea]," Moerschel said, "I spend a significant amount of effort, much to the laughter of my family and friends, exploring high-end loose leaf tea from many parts of the world."

To balance academics, Moerschel says communicating with his teachers helps ensure academic sustainability.

"I try my best to get sleep, keep track of my assignments and make sure I have a clear communication line to my teachers when I need them to assist me. Having strong relationships helps me achieve a clearer picture of [my goals]."

In school, Moerschel enjoys courses where he can study works with his peers and teachers.

"My favorite course is English. I enjoy analyzing literature and delving deep into the symbolism of art. There is something about experiencing a

piece of work alongside a group of people my age or older that is truly unifying," Moerschel stated.

Career-wise, Moerschel adds that his journey might be a difficult one, but with time and effort, it can be achievable.

"I am in the process of developing my own content for television, radio, podcasting and social media. Within the next few months, I intend to expand my focus to include more live television production and eventually explore documentary filmmaking."

"I would advise to anyone who wants to embark upon a career at this age to make it a routine to ask themselves if they are truly gaining satisfaction from what they are doing," Moerschel stated, "Seek out moments to breathe and sit back in appreciation of your efforts. Learn to take constructive criticism and develop close relationships with those around you."

Moerschel embodies the idea that students at New Trier aren't just "students"— they can fulfill their aspirations by balancing academics and extracurriculars to fulfill their dreams. To Moerschel, he's not just a student, rather he prefers the term entrepreneur.

Movember returns to NT

Juniors Matt Booden and Ben Yoder rally a group to benefit men's health

by Cleo Pool

This November, juniors Ben Yoder and Matt Booden are taking part in No Shave November for the second year in a row.

No Shave November also known as Movember is a charity that supports prostate cancer, mental health, and testicular cancer. To take part in this movement, one can run or walk 60 miles, host a fundraiser to collect money, and of course not shave.

Booden and Yoder have again made the decision to ditch the razors, but this year they have a team of members rallying behind them. Last year the two alone raised \$180 but this year, they have a new plan.

"This being our second time, and having a lot more people partaking we set a goal of \$500," said Yoder.

This year the boys came to November with a different approach. After last year, the movement picked up some traction around the school, so this year they have a team known as the New Trier Beard Team.

The money the team will raise will go to funding many projects that support men's health. According to the Movember site, this charity has funded over 1,250 projects since 2003.

Booden decided to join this movement after watching his brother and now he follows in his footsteps.

"My older brother whose done it for the past 5 years, he did it in college a lot and he would grow out this huge mustache every year," said Booden

As for Yoder, he followed in Matt's footsteps. He was attached to this cause because of the simplicity.



Donate to the NT Beard Team!

"I hadn't heard about Movember until Booden had told me about it last year, and I found the idea appealing just because it's so easy to do. It takes zero effort to not shave, and raising money for men's health awareness is just an added bonus," said Yoder.

It hasn't been easy for the boys to create a large following. They reached out to students and staff members but many didn't want to grow facial hair.

"The biggest challenge is getting people on board. A lot of people I talked to said 'I can't grow anything', 'I don't wanna look weird', and a lot of male staff members said, 'My wife is gonna kill me' or 'I have parent teacher conferences coming up,'" said Booden.

Not only has it been difficult to grow their team but also spreading awareness hasn't been easy. The No Shave movement has often been overlooked. But Yoder and Booden see it as their duty to spread awareness for the charity and men's health.

"Not a lot of other people are aware of this fundraiser, so that's why Booden and I are trying to use the New Trier News to spread awareness," said Yoder.

"The point is that it is gonna look weird, I don't really like the way that this looks typically, but it's supposed to look weird, it's supposed to look quirky, and it's supposed to promote a discussion," said Booden.