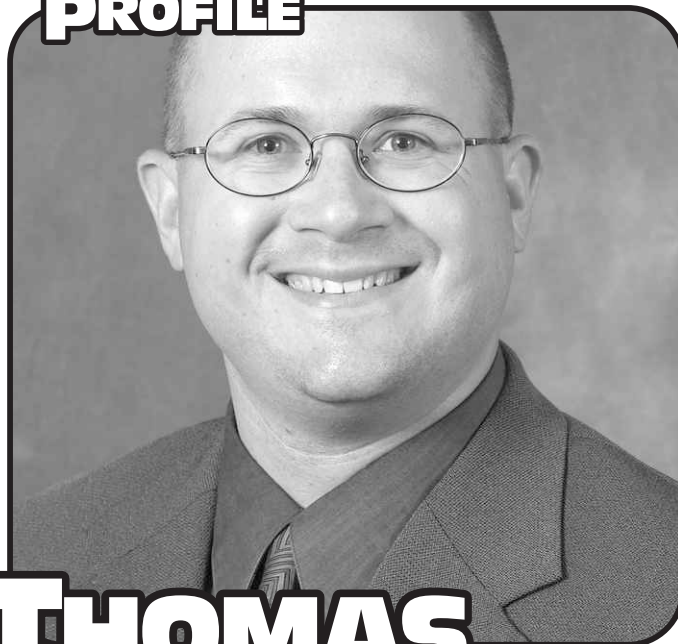


ALUMNI PROFILE

Where has life taken you since you've left WSDP and PCEP?

Since I graduated from Plymouth-Canton High School in 1993, life has taken me to Marquette, Houghton, Indianapolis, back to Marquette, and then to Canton – about five miles away from where I was when I left.

After graduating high school, I went north to Northern Michigan University, where I earned my bachelor's degree in public relations, minoring in journalism. I originally started my college career as a broadcasting major, but switched to public relations after finding a campus job with the athletics department that gave me some insight as to what my career should be. I spent my college days working for the Sports Information Office at NMU, where I gained valuable experience that has helped me



PAUL THOMAS

CANTON 1993

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get to where I am today. At Northern Michigan, I worked for a two-man office that was in charge of the public and media relations for NMU's 13 sports, including Division I men's ice hockey. I worked on the statistics crew for most of the sports, and as I progressed in my college career, I was given some sports of my own, as well as the opportunity to design media guides – two of which won national awards my senior year. I was also able to dabble in sportscasting, occasionally filling in on NMU hockey TV and radio broadcasts and serving as the color man for NMU volleyball radio broadcasts, while also serving as one of the voices of the NMU Sports Hotline.

After graduation from college in 1997, I went further north to Houghton to take a job as the assistant director of athletic communications and marketing for Michigan Tech University. At Tech, I handled media and public relations for football and men's and women's basketball, as well as other sports, and was the play-by-play man for the men's and women's basketball teams on the road. Fresh out of college, this type of position was a rarity, as most job candidates have to complete an internship before getting a full-time job in the sports information profession. But since the director at MTU was familiar with me and my work at Northern, I was the lead candidate for the position, despite being out of college for a total of two months.

I spent two years at Tech, but after six years in the cold and snow of the Upper Peninsula, my career went south (literally), taking me to Indianapolis to work as a

communications assistant for the Midwestern Collegiate Conference (MCC), which most folks now call the Horizon League. The MCC introduced me to big-time college athletics, as I got a chance to work the league's men's basketball championship, as well as work on the media relations staff for the 2000 NCAA Division I Men's Basketball First/Second Rounds. My time at the MCC was short, but I kept my contacts and eventually came back to Indy to work the 2001 NCAA Final Four and see Michigan State win the championship. Working the Final Four has been a highlight of my career; but riding an elevator with Mohammed Ali and Magic Johnson before the game and meeting Steve Mariucci after the national championship game made that event something I'll never forget.

I eventually made my way back to Northern Michigan. I spent two years at NMU in a professional capacity, handling a number of sports, including hockey, designing the athletic department's web site and working on all the office's publications. Eventually, word got out about the job I was doing, and when an opening for a hockey SID at the University of Michigan became available, my phone was ringing.

My first year at Michigan was a busy one, as the field hockey team won the NCAA title – Michigan's first national championship in a women's team sport – while the ice hockey team won the CCHA regular-season the tournament titles and made it to the NCAA Frozen Four in St. Paul. This year has been no different, as the field hockey team got into the NCAA Tournament, and the ice hockey team has won the CCHA Tournament and stands poised to make another run to the Frozen Four in Buffalo, N.Y.

It has been almost 10 years since I graduated from high school, and I've enjoyed my life and career so far. But, as I say that my goals have been met, I have new goals for my life and career (and now my family), all of which lead me into an unknown direction. That's the beauty of life in the 'real world' – sometimes what you love to do changes, and it's your job to find out what

makes you happy and go after it. So, if I have the chance to write again 10 years from now, I would venture to say the story I just told will not compare to the one that is waiting for me in the years to come.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

In my spare time (which doesn't exist from August-April due to athletics season), I like to play a lot of golf and softball. Now that I'm married, I also spend a lot of time with my wife, who is a pastor at Plymouth First United Methodist Church.

Since my job is a fast-paced, high-stress environment, I tend to enjoy things that are relaxing. My wife is kind enough to allow me to own a PlayStation2, and during the athletic season, I became a master of Tiger Woods Golf to help me wind down from a hectic day. I also read a lot of books, curling up with a Tom Clancy novel or reading something from the Left Behind series.

I also enjoy traveling, and just getting out to have fun. I can spend a week doing nothing at a cabin up north or running around Cedar Point, depending on my mood.

What is your favorite memory of WSDP?

My favorite memory of WSDP has to be calling basketball games with Alyson Nouné. Alyson, who was one of the best basketball players Canton High School will ever see, and I called men's basketball for Canton and Salem my senior year, and the MAB awarded me first place and her second place in the sportscasting category that year. From what I remember, it took a little coaxing to get Alyson on the air with me, but once she did, I think even she'll tell you she had fun. When I was calling games, WSDP did the women's games with one person in the fall, then when the men's season hit, we did a two-person broadcast. Since my knowledge of basketball was limited (I could call the play but didn't really know the nuances of it), I went to Alyson, who I had watched and broadcasted her games for two years. She brought her knowledge of basketball to the air in 1993, and for those who were able to listen, they got treated to a great broadcast. Alyson went on to win another award after I graduated, and anytime I'm in the WSDP offices, I smile when I see her name, because I know I had something to do with that.

Why was being involved with WSDP important for you?

Being involved with WSDP provided the foundation for the career I chose and the profession I am involved in today. When I started at WSDP during my sophomore year, I was doing a one-hour on-air shift. Once I got involved in sportscasting, I was hooked, and found something I really enjoyed doing. My sportscasting experience led me to new things in college and eventually I found a career out of it, but when I look back, I can say it all began when I got on the microphone at WSDP.

I also learned a great deal of responsibility and accountability at WSDP. I remember the end of my sophomore year, when then-station manager Dave Snyder put me on academic probation for less than average grades (in fact, they were so bad, I still haven't seen that report card). I loved being a part of WSDP so much that I let everything else go, resulting in a semester off the air. That was a hard lesson to learn, but eventually, the grades came back up (way up to be exact) and I got back on the air with a greater appreciation than I had when I was suspended. I learned a major lesson that year – and my grades never slipped again – in high school or college.

Another reason being involved with WSDP was important for me was that I loved sports, but since I was a bit on the small side for most of my high school career, participating in sports didn't agree with me very much. WSDP provided a forum to be a part of sports without actually getting on the playing field.

What advice would you give to a current WSDP Staff Member?

To the staff members at WSDP – cherish the time you are spending at the station, because you are some of the luckiest students around. When you go to college, the experience you are gaining right now will put you ahead of other freshmen in your classes that don't get a chance to work at a top-notch radio station as a high school student.

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Even though the music is different than it was 10 years ago, I think the students that have gone through WSDP since I've left have carried on the tradition of excellence that the station has come to be known for. That's what you need to do. Make a difference at the station and help keep the station among the elite in the state.

Following that line of thought, I encourage all of you to make yourselves known wherever you are. A lot of my success has come from getting to know a lot of people and being a person that is involved instead of someone who just goes through the motions. Teachers, professors and bosses look for people you are self-motivated and inspired – be one of those people.

Moving away from radio, my advice for the current WSDP staff is this – make goals for yourself and see them through. Have a purpose for everything you do, and make sure that purpose not only improves you, but those close to you and the community around you. Whether you know it or not, we all make a difference in each person's life we come into contact with – so make sure you are making a positive difference when that contact is made. Most importantly, smile, because life is too short to be brought down by something that will be trivial when you look back on it.

Finally, I want to offer three things that were given to me by my boss (now a very good friend of mine) when I was an assistant at Michigan Tech. They have helped me many times in my life and career, and I want to share them with you:

Believe in yourself

Trust in God

Dare to dream

Though you may not see it yet, you all are better people for being involved with WSDP, and my hope is for a bright and prosperous future for each one of you – wherever life takes you.