Written by Emily Warner, Daily Vidette Sports Editor
Monday, 03 December 2012 18:13

In my room I have a copy of the picture of Doug Collins and Will Robinson that the statue outside of Redbird Arena was sculpted after. I keep it hung up because it's autographed by Collins and, as a result, covering the statue's unveiling in September 2009 is one of the coolest things I've been able to do while covering ISU sports for the Daily Vidette.

With my eighth and final semester of covering ISU athletics coming to a close, I've got a lot of memories to look back on. Getting paid to watch sports is a dream to many, and it's one that I've been able to live throughout my college career.

If I search my name on the Vidette's website there are over 200 hits for stories I've written. It's impossible to remember all of them, but there are certainly some that do come to mind and some memories that I'd like to share.

With it being basketball season, naturally that's what comes to mind first. Although I feel like I'm beating a dead horse by bringing up the Missouri Valley Conference men's basketball tournament in St. Louis, it is probably the greatest experience I've had covering an ISU sport.

One thing that people might not know is that as a member of the press sitting courtside, we're supposed to appear unbiased — meaning no clapping or cheering and trying to keep facial expressions and emotions in check.

While at the tournament last season, I watched courtside as the Redbirds defeated Northern Iowa, followed by their narrow defeat of nationally-ranked Wichita State. That game was down to the wire and I was pretty much clawing at my legs while stifling screams watching ISU defeat the Shockers 65-64.

Obviously after that was the overtime loss to Creighton, also a top-25 team at the time. It was exciting to see ISU compete, but just being there watching the likes of Doug McDermott, one of the best players in the country, play while ISU fans chant "Daddy's boy!" (his dad is the Creighton head coach) was satisfying enough. Also, with it being such a close game, I heard ISU President Al Bowman yelling at the refs from his seat nearby — which just added to how great I think he his.

Although the team didn't win the tournament, it was still a great experience to be a part of. While the ISU women's basketball team hasn't had success in the MVC tournament while I've covered them, they sure have in the WNIT.

The game that sticks out to me the most is when the Redbirds defeated Illinois in the quarterfinals of the WNIT in 2010.

One would think that while sitting courtside at a postseason college basketball game, I'd be really attentive, but I remember randomly being really tired throughout the first half. However, thanks to the courtesy caffeinated beverages available for the media at ISU sporting events, I was able to keep my eyes wide open for the second half of the game and I don't think I even blinked in the final seconds.

After Katie Broadway hit a three to give ISU a two-point advantage with 19 seconds remaining, it was hard to maintain composure as the Illini missed their final two shots, securing the win for ISU in front of what was, at the time, the second biggest home crowd for the team in program history.

Covering four seasons of soccer has been a great experience for me for a handful of reasons — one of them being that they were good and covering a winning team makes it a lot easier. Last season I had to show up to a weekday game late because it overlapped with one of my classes — when I arrived I was less than 20 minutes late, but ISU was already ahead 5-0, a very abnormal score for a soccer game against a conference rival like Creighton.

At one point or another, I have written about every ISU sport with the exception of gymnastics (which is too bad because gymnastics is awesome). But getting a chance to write about a wide range of sports has given me the opportunity to talk to some of the best athletes to don Redbird uniforms and have Division I coaches know me by name.

I feel so fortunate that I've gotten to talk to softball coach Melinda Fischer on a regular basis for the past four years, in addition to soccer head coach Drew Roff and women's basketball coach Stephanie Glance and men's basketball coach Dan Muller, in addition to their predecessors.

These people are all big time coaches and I feel very fortunate that they appreciate and make time for ISU's student newspaper because that's not the case at all universities.

Finally, one of my favorite parts about covering ISU atheltics has been when the people I'm writing about tell me they like what I wrote. A couple years ago I was having a terrible day when I opened up my email to see that softball player Kara Nelson, whom I had just written a feature on, had emailed me. Naturally my first thought was that my day was about to get even worse becuase I probably messed something up.

Nope.

She went out of her way to email me and tell me how much she liked the story, and just like I have everytime I've gotten positive feedback, I appreciated it probably more than she knew.

I don't know if I'll pursue a career in sports journalism, but if I have to settle for just the sports memories I've made covering ISU athletics, I'll take it because those memories and experiences are second to none — the same way I view Redbird Athletics.