

Lake News Online

Sports

COLUMN: Coronavirus cannot define us

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Whatever the future holds, as a sports journalist in the Lake area I am encouraged and confident that sense of normalcy will eventually return because I have seen firsthand how young student athletes, programs and entire communities respond to adversity.

Another day in this strange new reality.

Normally, I'd be heading into the office, sending out emails to coaches, working on game and features stories and building the next sports pages of the Lake Sun before getting ready to head out and cover another game or event. The air is warming and spring sports would usually be in full swing.

Instead, I must work from the comfort of my own home as I have done for the past two weeks and it has been 34 days since I have had the privilege of shooting photos, writing notes and conducting interviews at any game. This ugly coronavirus pandemic has slowed everything to a halt, forcing us to adjust to harsh new realities nobody asked for. Schools have shut down, businesses have been limited or closed as well and families throughout the country face uncertainty of what comes next in the effort to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Compared to challenges faced in the past, staying at home and practicing social distancing seems like a much simpler task than storming the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. However, it is still a

tough situation for many as the pandemic continues to unfold. I am grateful to have the privilege of being with my family and my two dogs as I work from home in these unprecedented times, but I certainly do miss the sound of a bat, swing of a golf club or a starting gun at the track.

When it was announced the famed “March Madness”, otherwise known as the NCAA Tournament, would be played in front of empty arenas I tweeted at the time that I was picking the coronavirus to win the national championship. I wish now that the tweet, intended to make light of a terrible situation, was not so ominous and true as the tournament was eventually cancelled like many other events.

I will certainly not look to take the simple joy and excitement of athletic competition for granted when the day comes that sports and some resemblance of normality comes back to society. At the same time, I cannot imagine what these seniors are going through as they remain on the sidelines not knowing when they can return to school, let alone any kind of competition. These student athletes have worked hard the past four years to reach new heights in the classroom and on the field and I hope they will have the opportunity to proudly represent their schools once again before graduation day.

Whatever the future holds, as a sports journalist in the Lake area I am encouraged and confident that sense of normalcy will eventually return because I have seen firsthand how young student athletes, programs and entire communities respond to adversity.

In just my five short years in the Lake of the Ozarks region, I have seen athletes return from debilitating injuries, some like former Versailles wrestler Dylan Ballew fundraise for cancer research, communities across the region coming together to support an athlete with a spinal cord injury, Eldon track and field athletes succeeding after a tornado tore through their town and returning to rebuild their community, Osage wrestlers supporting families in need over the holidays and the communities of Macks Creek and Climax Springs raise funds for Relay for Life. Even today, they continue to do so as the Camdenton LASER

(Laker Afterschool Science, Engineering and Robotics) team is making face shields as part of an effort to provide healthcare workers the vital protective equipment they need on the front lines to take on the pandemic.

This coronavirus cannot be allowed to define us. As facts may continue to come in that we do not like, we must be adamant in staying positive and highlighting all the good that is being done to combat this pandemic. It may be a strange reality, but I am hopeful for a stronger and brighter future because of the resolve the Lake area has already shown in my short time here.

May these challenging times bring out the best in all of us.

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