February 2001

How to Get on ESPN

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Recommended Citation
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Iowa Staters have a lot to be proud of when it comes to athletics. After languishing at the bottom of the Big 12 for years, the football team finally, finally, finally had a winning season this year and was in a bowl game. Once again, we've got powerhouse men's and women's basketball teams. This year has been sweet for all the fans who stuck with the 'Clones through the good, the bad, and the ugly.

But now that the national networks are regularly showing up for our games, we the fans want a little recognition, too. We've bought the crappy ISU merchandise. We've endured the taunts from our Hawkeye rivals. We've dutifully shown up at the crack of dawn to tailgate only to be disappointed by mid-afternoon. It's time for a little payback. Hey, what makes the camera crew focus so much on the fans anyway?

"Crowd shots add to the whole feel of the game," says Kevin Hall, camera operator for Des Moines' WOI-TV. Independent camera operator Mike Meyer agrees that seeing the fans on TV keeps the people at home pumped up. "We like to switch it up, and showing students and their enthusiasm is important."

Tom Williams, camera operator for the video board at Hilton Coliseum, says that a lot of people working the camera get ideas for crowd shots through tips they get via their headsets. "The camera was right there, and I just got lucky," she says. "Stemm wasn't in the first row flailing her hands around in the air trying to get attention; she just looked interested in the game. That just goes to show that you don't need to strip down and paint ISU on your chest to get yourself in the running for a close-up."

"We look for enthusiasm, but if someone looks intense and focused in on the game, they're good material," says Bill Krakau, camera operator for ESPN Regional. "But usually we're looking for crazy people who are just plain excited about the game."

Bill Yungclas is one of those "crazy people" who has little trouble getting on TV. If you've been to a women's basketball game, you know who he is. He's the senior citizen clad in cowboy boots, red slacks, a bright gold blazer, and a cardinal and gold tie. He's been attending the women's basketball games for 15 years, way before the era of Stacy Frese. Oh yeah, and he never shuts up. He's always yelling, screaming, and cheering for the team.

"Since the men were getting around 12,000 fans at their games, I wanted to try and make up for some of the fans that were missing from the women's games. They were getting more like 300 or 500," Yungclas says. So he decided to become "Wild Bill," a character that's gained attention from fans, foes, and media alike.

"I just make a lot of noise," Yungclas says. "They've picked up on it. I get shown on TV and reporters come to talk to me after games."

Since he's a certified super fan, Yungclas has words of wisdom for those who want to get picked out of the masses. "You have to get the crowd fired up. The zanier the outfit, the better. You should also sit in the area for the 'rowdies.' That's where the whole core group sits," he says.

Another renowned group of fans sits in the same area as Yungclas — three sets of brothers sporting referee jerseys. Their striped antics have gotten them plenty of on-air coverage and a full-page story in ESPN: The Magazine last April.

ISU graduate Dan Welk says the tradition began at a Nebraska game his freshman year. After ISU women's basketball head coach Bill Fennelly was removed from the game, Welk and fellow ISU fans Matt Scuffham and Jason McLatchie followed the refs off the court, loudly critiquing their performance.

"We thought getting [referee] shirts would be cool. Then we started hanging out with Wild Bill. The next thing you know, things just kind of happened," Welk says.

Scuffham says he was surprised when ESPN called him and his brother Mark to do a story on them. "It was a shock. You see yourself in the same magazine as all your favorite sports stars. That doesn't happen to a lot of fans."

Cyclone fan Deb Breeding also had a run-in with ESPN after she, her husband, and another couple donned construction hats bearing the ISU logo to the Kansas City Big 12 basketball tournament last year. An ESPN representative who spotted them in the balcony rewarded them by giving them courtside seats.

Cameraman Meyer says that if all else fails, a little promotion never hurts. "A great idea is to stay after a game that ESPN is covering and throw up a sign that says 'Sportscenter is next.'"

Shandra Wendorff is a sophomore in pre-journalism and an Ethos staff writer.