

Excited to start new journey at Unified Newspaper Group

MARK NESBITT

Assistant sports editor

As a Chicago Cubs and Bears fan, there is no better time to start a new job than the fall. And as the new assistant sports editor at Unified Newspaper Group, I can't wait to dive in and get started.

I'm not a stranger when it comes to the sports scene in the area. I'm looking forward to covering football games, tennis matches, swim meets, volleyball matches and cross country meets.



Nesbitt

I have worked as a sports reporter and education reporter at the Monroe Times for 10 years.

Prior to that, I worked as a sports reporter at the Sauk Prairie Eagle in Sauk City. I have covered the Badger South Conference and followed the Big Eight Conference from afar.

My daughter, Kayleigh Nesbitt, will be a junior at Monroe High School and she plays three sports — swimming, basketball and soccer. My wife, Anna, is a third-grade teacher at Taylor Park Elementary School in Freeport, Ill. and she is the pool manager at the Monroe City pool.

Sports has been a big part of my life and the

connections I have established through sports have turned into some life-long friendships.

I know rivalries are a big part of many high schools. I'm looking forward to covering the local rivalries like Oregon and Stoughton.

It's an honor to cover prep sports and the best part of it is not sampling the popcorn from each school, but the people. The student-athletes and the coaches I have the honor to meet and work with become the best moments.

I have spent the last couple of weeks reading issues Unified Newspaper Group prints (the Oregon Observer and Courier Hub

and Fitchburg Star) from last year to get a jump-start on the background information I will need.

This is an exciting time with a potential realignment of football in the state and the Big Eight Conference under a proposed plan moving from 10 to eight teams with Janesville Craig and Janesville Parker moving into the Badger Conference.

The fall is my favorite time of the year. It will be interesting to see if area football teams including Oregon, Stoughton, Verona, Stoughton and Madison West can make a return trip to the playoffs.

As the parent of a daughter who is a basketball

player, I always look forward to watching the battles Oregon will have with the Cheesemakers on the hardwood.

Monroe has made a run to state the past two years, but will have to see new players develop into new roles off the bench.

It has been interesting to witness the battles between Monroe and Oregon in girls soccer. Oregon has one of the state's premier soccer programs that every team in the Badger South Conference is chasing.

Some of my fondest memories of working in Monroe were covering the Cheesemakers' softball team making three straight trips to state, the Monroe

girls basketball team's run to the state tournament in Green Bay two straight years and the Darlington football team winning three consecutive silver trophies.

I will be making the rounds meeting coaches. I'm anxious to start covering new storylines in the area. A community newspaper is only as strong as the connections that are made with the residents living in the area.

I covered my first game for the Oregon Observer last week, watching the Oregon Orioles beat Ridgeway in a thrilling 5-4 comeback on Sunday.