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Sports check

So long, farewell, to the community I love, Burlington

Don't let the headline fool you.

I'm not moving. So no, you're not completely rid of me. But I am leaving the Burlington Standard Press and Southern Lakes Newspapers.

After a two-hour interview last Wednesday in Kenosha, and a short phone conversation last Thursday morning, I accepted a new job as the full-time sports guy at the Kenosha News.

Not only did I walk a mile and a half home from Lois Tire Shop Tuesday afternoon after dropping off my car for an oil change, stopping at Echo Lake park to enjoy a little nature.

But I went back to Echo Lake Park Tuesday evening to literally just sit there on a wooden picnic table and gaze at the beautiful sunset.

I never do these things – you know, exercise.

It's been that odd kind of five days since the big change that I'll be returning to full-time employment in the journalism field, what I got a degree in and what I love.

It was March 2019 when my sports editor position was eliminated at SLN, and I was hired like the next day by editor-in-chief Ed Nadolski as a freelancer, and I've continued as the Burlington sports beat writer since.

It's been nine years since Nadolski snatched me away from the Lake Geneva Regional News, a weekly newspaper now owned by Lee Enterprises along with the Kenosha News and Racine Journal-Times.

The three papers from the new Wisconsin Valley Media Company.

For the past three years, I've been writing for Kenosha News sports under long-time sports editor Mike Johnson, and Journal Times legend Peter Jackel.

I feel like I've prepared to take this next natural step up the journalism hierarchy with daily deadlines, turning around a story in the same night for online posting and taking more videos and photos than I really ever have.



By MIKE RAMCZYK Correspondent

It turns out buying a sports camera two years ago worked wonders, as I've been able to take my Nikon D700 to any game or event.

The timing just feels right. I'm ready for a new challenge, and I know being a full-time sports writer at a big newspaper can only lead to bigger and better things.

It's already a huge, awesome thing.

I finally feel a bit like I'm getting what I "deserve" for my 15 years of journalism, a result of the countless Friday nights at high school football games along with hours writing on deadline and many weekends spent away from my family.

Sure, the grind will be challenging, but it will be nice to rely on a steady paycheck every two weeks once again.

It was extremely difficult to call Ed and say I have to quit.

I love Burlington. I grew up here.

I am raising my family of 8-year-old Coraline, 3-year-old Roman and mom here.

It's a great place, and let's be honest, it's easy because I live here.

I can hit up the Burlington and Catholic Central football games in the same night and get photos for both. Killing two birds with one stone is simple and helps my work, and it's nice that Burlington is in the middle of all the schools I cover.

I have written about this community now for nine years, and I've even taught in the school district.

I wouldn't leave unless the opportunity was absolutely worth it.

And it is.

Also, there will be Westosha Central, Wilmot and random Kenosha schools' games against Burlington, and I'll make sure to get to

at least one that is played in Burlington this fall, I hope.

I would like to give a huge THANK YOU to all my Burlington coaches, players and other sources.

I've developed friendships with several of you over the years, and I've always cherished our interactions and even embraced any differences.

Covering the Demon baseball team win it all in 2016 and the volleyball teams capture gold balls in 2017 and 2018 were extra-special moments, and the Tony Romo Football Camp was always fun.

Perhaps my all-time favorite, though, was the Packers-Cowboys game I covered in the 2015 NFC Divisional Playoffs, when Dez Bryant dropped "the catch."

Finally, the Burlington flood in 2017 was both devastating and exhilarating to cover.

It was exciting to follow and cover, and I won a few awards for my work.

More than anything, I enjoyed helping displaced people and those in need with positive stories of love, sacrifice and the togetherness of a Burlington community that really steps up for people.

Burlington Strong isn't just a saying because I see examples of it on the regular.

It's been real, I love all you readers and those who have helped me along the way.

I am downright sad to stop covering my hometown, and I will miss you all so much, but I vow to keep Burlington's names and faces in the Kenosha News from time to time.

In my introduction column back in August 2013, I said a goal for you to remember me.

Well, I hope you remember all the shenanigans, the prediction columns, stories of my cancer struggles and baby Roman's rough childhood, fun times at the park with Coraline, meetings that got out of hand, vivid, captivating stories and eye-popping photos.

I'm not sure if I'll miss

late Tuesday nights where I wouldn't have everything written or edited until 2 a.m. or early-morning Wednesday deadlines, but I'll certainly miss the people.

Here's a roll call of shout-outs to my co-workers:

To Jennifer Eisenbart, thank you for taking me under your wing and teaching me the ins and outs of this wonderful Burlington community. It was always fun to catch up about sports, and I really appreciate you giving me some extra work when you returned last year.

You are a talented writer and editor, and you tell very deep, intriguing, human-interest stories that I appreciate. Let's hit up Charcoal Grill soon for a farewell party for me, ha.

To Jason Arndt, it was fun hiring you back in 2015 because I felt like I finally had some help, thank God. I really enjoyed watching your progression from new guy to editor, and I feel like your news stories and writing just keeps getting better and better.

I'll never forget when we tag-teamed Catholic Central basketball at state in Madison in 2016. It was fun to drive up and get to know you. And hanging and working together at the Twin Lakes office when it was still there was a blast.

Please keep reaching out randomly to catch up, I like it.

To Heather Ruenz, you are one of the most patient and friendliest editors I've ever had. I deeply appreciate how you covered Whitewater's state championship in girls basketball for me, and I've always felt comfortable talking to you about anything really, and especially venting.

Thank you for hanging out with me and your sister and others for lunch that one time after a Westosha Central basketball game.

Honestly, you're one of the most talented people I've ever worked with, and you are an amazing human being. Your work ethic is admirable, and it's no surprise you've worked your way up to where you are now.

To Tracy Ouellette,

you can really make me LAUGH. I love our phone conversations. You mostly want to bite my head off, I think, because I'm owing you a story most of the time, but we always find a way to turn it into a friendly chat. You're another one I enjoy having a beer with at Charcoal Grill or wherever, and we all need to have a reunion/going-away party soon. I really enjoy the designs and vibrant colors you put into the special sections and especially the Lifestyle page. Those were some of my favorite things to write because I knew you would make it look like a masterpiece. Stay funny, thanks for always asking about my family and caring about my struggles, and stay in touch!

Last, but not least, Ed Nadolski, wow, where do I begin? You believed in me, man. Straight up, you believed in me. There's no better feeling than knowing your boss really, truly loves and believes in you as a person and respects and loves your work, and would go to any length to protect you against all the haters and always have your back.

There were certainly a few rough times where readers wanted my head, and you always fought for me. That's what a great editor does.

We have a deeper connection than I've ever had with a boss in my 26 years of employment, and it's not even close.

You taught me a lot about this business, especially how to take better photos, design more creative layout and write with more flair and color, and to always be objective and professional.

Of course, we are cancer soulmates, and you have always been a good go-to for advice about my fears and different concerns about my cancer, which is thankfully gone. But when I was going through it, your own cancer journey probably helped calm me down and let me know there was a brighter day ahead. I'll never forget all the work you gave me when I

was battling chemotherapy. You treated me "normal," like nothing was wrong, and gave me confidence to keep going, though I wanted to give up at times. Even though I was sick and weak, you always understood if I had to miss a game or assignment and needed help. You always made sure to forgive me and have patience.

Always know that I'm here if you ever need anything regarding your cancer, and you are super strong (college running back) and you will keep kicking ass like you always do.

I'll just finish with the fact that you gave a Burlington kid a chance to write for his hometown paper, one I grew up reading and learning because it was delivered to our house. My late mother Joni, God rest her soul, LOVED the Standard Press, and seeing her face and how proud she was of me when she read my stories was EVERYTHING.

Same with my dad. He read every edition word-for-word since I was born in 1982. ha. Along with the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Hi-Liter, Standard Press Mini, you name it, he read it.

And now, at age 85, and especially for the last couple years since my mom passed in 2018, Ray, my dad, has gained more of an appreciation for my stories each week in the Standard Press. He has given me more compliments than ever, and I love meeting people he knew back in the days and my dad beaming with pride when he says, "my son writes for the Standard Press!"

I can't put into words enough how grateful I am for everything you have done for me, Ed, thank you, and I know we'll keep in touch. I'm happy to call you a close friend.

So thank you, Burlington, for nine awesome years.

I will never forget the honor of covering my beautiful hometown, and the memories will last forever.

As my mom Joni always used to say, "Peace, love, joy."