

JayMac

Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication Alumni Association



GAYLORD ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

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DARI NOWKHAH

Host, SEC Network & ESPN Radio
Charlotte, NC

He might cover the SEC now, but Dari Nowkha still bleeds crimson and cream. A 1998 broadcast journalism graduate of the H.H. Herbert School of Journalism and Mass Communication (now Gaylord College), the Tulsa native is seen and heard by millions in his roles at ESPN. We asked him about how Gaylord impacted his life and career.

What is your favorite memory from your time at Gaylord College?

My favorite memory was getting to do ACTUAL TELEVISION for the first time. Having the opportunity to actually produce a sportscast, edit the video, write the copy and then sit on an actual TV set for the first time is something I’ll never forget. All that happened over in Copeland Hall. And while it isn’t the structural beauty the Gaylord building of today is, it still gave me that first TV opportunity.

Do you have a favorite faculty/staff member from Gaylord?

How has your Gaylord experience impacted your professional journey?

When I was at OU, there was not a long history of success when it came to the broadcasting profession. That, combined with Jerry Howard’s words of “discouragement” served as warnings to me that I needed to work harder than anybody, be better than everybody and take nothing for granted. My work ethic was formed at Gaylord. It’s served me well ever since.

What advice would you give to current students aspiring to a JMC career?

Do all you can when it comes to getting hands-on experience. Be part of every broadcasting avenue OU offers. Not only that, but find internships either locally in Oklahoma City or at other national or regional networks where you can make great contacts, talk to people who have reached the highest levels and learn more than you ever imagined. Be involved. Be busy.

My first broadcasting instructor is a man named Jerry Howard. I'll never forget the first day of my first class with him. He essentially told us all that if we are lucky, 10% of us would ever work on-the-air in television. And, if we were males looking to do sports, the odds were significantly lower. It was a real eye-opener that could have scared me into another major, but I used it as fuel to work harder to succeed.

What led you to your current role at ESPN?

My career path took me to local TV stops in Kalispell, Montana... Lincoln, Nebraska, and Tulsa, Oklahoma. I spent roughly two years at each stop and, in 2004, had the opportunity to go to Bristol, Connecticut, and work at ESPN. After seven years in Bristol hosting shows like SportsCenter, Baseball Tonight, College Football Live, and many others, I wanted a role where I could be a more important piece of a network. I went to ESPNU in Charlotte, North Carolina, as the lead host of that college sports network. After three years, ESPN started the SEC Network in the same building in Charlotte and I was chosen to be the lead host of that network. I also host a weekly show on ESPN Radio called "Dari and Mel on ESPN Radio." My co-host is NFL Draft expert Mel Kiper, Jr. We've done that show on Saturday mornings for the past seven years. I fell into radio by being given chances to fill-in on radio shows early in my tenure in Bristol. That weekly radio show is now one of the best parts of my job.

What is your vision for your professional career?

My vision now is to continue being a valuable asset to a national network. I love my role in Charlotte at the SEC Network. Our network is incredibly important to a fanatical fan base in college sports. I get to be the "face" of that network in many ways. But part of the happiness comes from finding a location where my family and I are so happy. We love being in Charlotte and I hope to be here for years and years to come.

What do you do for fun outside of work?

My life outside of work is my family. I enjoy playing with my three kids (Nick, 12; Nahla, 8; and Leighton, 5). We enjoy going to Carolina Panthers and Charlotte Hornets games as well as local theater. Basically, when I'm not at work, I'm at home or somewhere with my family.



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