

John Boccacino:

were going to make it in this business to now, I think when you have those few moments where you can reflect, it is special and it is rewarding to see where things started and where they've ended up.

John Boccacino:

Especially with the fraternity of NFL play-by-play broadcasters, Syracuse and Newhouse produced a ton of amazing broadcasters. I know John Murphy with the Buffalo Bills, he suffered a stroke. He's sidelined for the time being, but he's a Syracuse alum. Dave Pash, Syracuse alum. I could rattle them off, but you know them better. You live that life. Do you ever pinch yourself to think I am part of this select fraternity of people who call games on a weekly basis?

Anish Shroff:

All the time. All the time. Even today, a few hours earlier, I was at the stadium doing some stuff for the Panthers and I'd gone to Starbucks just to get a quick bite to eat and coffee. I'm walking back and you kind of look up and see the stadium and think, this is where I work. It feels surreal. It's an NFL team. The NFL is the biggest sports brand there is in America, and to have one of those 32 jobs, that's special. I have a lot of gratitude toward the Panthers organization for not just hiring me, but in my year plus, just the way they've treated me and the way they've made me feel welcomed and appreciated, that's not lost on me.

John Boccacino:

Did you have a welcome to the NFL moment?

Anish Shroff:

Yeah. Last season, the Carolina Panthers shed themselves this season. There were so many moving parts and so many things that changed. Four games in, the head coach is fired. Shortly thereafter, the face of the franchise, Christian McCaffrey, is traded. You're sitting there, and you're leaving SoFi Stadium in LA and you're wondering, man, will they ever win another game this season? Then the next thing you know, they go into the next game at home against Tampa Bay, Tom Brady. Nobody's expecting anything. PJ Walker, who if not for injuries, probably doesn't even make the 53-man roster, once training camp broke and once the preseason ended, Walker's getting to start. It was the second or third career start. He's got Tom Brady. They win 21 to three, and you're going, man, I've seen it all. The following week, PJ throws his 62-yard touchdown pass at the very end to DJ Moore at the end of regulation, and that tied the game. If the Panthers make the extra point, they win.

They miss the extra point, miss a field goal overtime, lose the game, and you're thinking, wow, this rollercoaster of emotions. Then the next thing you know, you look up, it's week 17, they're playing the Bucs on the road, and if the Panthers had won that game, they would be in first place in the division, and all they would've to do is win week 18 and you guarantee yourself not just a playoff spot, but a home playoff game. Instead, what we witnessed with Carolina's fumble in the fourth quarter, we ended up being on the receiving end, the Panthers did, of the last great game of Tom Brady's career. Tampa ends up winning the game. Panthers finished second, a game out of first place in the NFC South. The welcome to the NFL moment was just really the odyssey that was the Carolina Panther's 2022 season.

John Boccacino:







would have a lead that had nothing to do with the team and the video that was about to roll. It was kind of an entry point.

As a writer, you're taking your audience from left field to the pitcher's mound. Tony Soprano was left field, and then you're going to bring that story into the pitcher's mound. I remember my news director going to me, yeah, you put Tony Soprano up there and I was wondering, where's he going with this? The light bulb just kind of went off. When he said, where's he going with this, I said, sold on it? He goes, yeah, yeah, no, you had my attention. It was like, okay. Find that different way to tell a story. If I'm putting a Mariner's logo behind it, it's just another story about the Mariners, but if it's written a certain way and you've got a Tony Soprano reference and then that's going to take you into the Mariner's story, you can hold your viewer's attention.

That experimentation, using history, literature, pop culture, just cultural literacy in general, I just thought this works. So much of this is trial and error. You throw paint at the wall and then you go, not it, tear it down. You try it again, but when you get something and you nail that's a narrow that you have in your quiver forever and you can go to it when you need to it. I remember my first few jobs, there was a lot of experimentation with storytelling, and then moving onto television at a local level, having anchored, having hosted at ESPN, having done play by play on radio and television, having done talk radio, you kind of draw on all different parts of the industry, all these different mediums, and you pick different things that translate and there's a lot of crossover. I think over time you kind of concoct your own style.

The other thing I would say is I read a lot, and that would be my advice to any broadcaster who might be listening to this. Read; read a lot. Even if you want to do sports, read, and not just about sports. You get so many great ideas from reading. When I was a freshman in college, I would just write down in a notebook words, phrases, turn of phrases that I would come across in my reading, stuff that I liked. Often times it would be I would see a word and then I would put the phrase around it. Hey, where could I potentially use this? Whether it's anchoring, whether it's hosting, whether it's doing play by play. These notebooks started to fill up over time, and now we've got the notepad app on your iPhone, so it makes it even easier, but so much of what we do is based in language. All it really is. Language is our currency. The more you do this, you try to find ways to manipulate language and get creative with language and have fun with language.

I feel that's becoming something that's not valued as much as it used to be. It used to be about the ability to write, and now it's just sometimes it feels like it's just hot takes and it's not really about the quality of writing, and writing transcends everything, whether it's something that's scripted or even play by play when you're writing in real time without an edit button. Now sometimes it feels like it's a decibel game. Whoever screams loudest wins. Whoever says the most outrageous thing wins instead of how you say it and what you say. Maybe I'm a dinosaur, but I still see some value in how you say it and what you say.

John Boccacino:

Now, I want to go back in the way back a little bit with the next couple of the questions here. Growing up, you were the son of parents who came to this country from India, first generation. How did you get into American sports and who were some of those teams and athletes that really ignited that spark for your sports?

Anish Shroff:

Yeah. That's a great question. I always say baseball was a way of life, not just for me but for my family. My dad got here in 1972 to study originally, and he got to New York and he was living in Hoboken, right when George Steinbrenner bought the Yankees and the Yankees went on that great run in the 70s. They'd been to a couple of World Series, they lose, then they go sign Catfish Hunter, they bring Reggie Jackson. My dad started following those Yankee teams when they had Catfish and Reggie and Willie Randolph and Nettles and Thurman Munson, and he became a baseball fan. Then the 80s sort of roll in and the Met Zone, the town, so he would watch all these Met Games with Doc and Daryl and Sid Fernandez and Ron Darling and those teams, and Keith Fernandez.

I have the 1995 Chicago Cubs lineup in my heart as my favorite teams of mine growing up, just like you do with the Yankees, with the Giants, and it's so cool the way that your parents adopted the sports of their new homeland, and then you became such a rabid sports fan and they supported your dreams, like all good parents should. Do you remember who the first sportscaster was that really you admired that you had a fascination for?

Anish Shroff:

There were a couple. It wasn't just one, but there were a couple. One was Bob Costas. Costas to me, I don't know how I saw this right away, but I remember when I was little, if you go back early 90s the NBA on NBC game opens that he would narrate, they resonated with me on such a deep level. The way he was able to manipulate language the way he could crystallize a narrative and take a story and make it come to life and really sell what's at stake, really make the game feel big, that resonated with me at a young age. Mike and the Mad Dog on the radio, I listened to them when I came home from school every single day. That was the soundtrack. We were a big radio family, 1010 WINS News in New York, they used to have a saying, you give us 22 minutes, we give the world, and it was this all news station.

We had a little radio that was hooked up to the light in our downstairs bathroom, so once you flip on the light, the radio would go on and it was 1010 WINS News. At 15 and 45, they would have the sports update. Every morning before school, I would make sure I would time my showers where I would be in there at 15 and 45 so I could get the sports news. I listened to a lot of sports on the radio, Eye and Eagle doing the Jets, John Sterling and Michael K doing the Yankees. Then our local sports guy was Len Berman and we watched Len religiously.

He and I have traded some messages over the years, and I tell him in our household, he was like Uncle Len. Hey, it's 6:00, he's about to give the sports news. Again, back in the day, you didn't have Twitter, you didn't have Instagram, you didn't have the internet. You had to wait around for this stuff to get your sports news. We would sit down in front of the TV and we'd watch NBC four, and it was Len Berman and he was our guy.

John Boccacino:

Then parlaying off of those excited feelings as a kid, when did you realize that sports casting was what you wanted to do with your career?

Anish Shroff:

Yeah. I think I found out around 14, 15 years old that this is actually something you can do. Probably right around the time I was a sophomore in high school and I started getting serious about knowing what I wanted to do. I hadn't really done anything in the arena of whether it was student newspaper. I didn't do that. We didn't really have student television at my high school or student radio at my high school, but I kind of was thinking, hey, this would be cool to work in sports, to write about it or to broadcast it. It became an interest of mine probably around my sophomore year of high school.

I started looking at schools and I got to Syracuse and you go down the list, here's Bob Costas, here's Marv Albert, here's Mike Tirico, here's Ian Eagle, Dick Stockton, Marty Glickman, and the names, Len Berman. So many of the guys I admired who I just mentioned to you before had gone to Syracuse. That very quickly became the school that I wanted



John Boccacino:

As a former gannet reporter, I will easily admit that that used to be a career you could make your living in, but things have sadly changed the more digital scope, but no. The fact that you really took this passion, you ran with it, and it wasn't like you had a lot of role models who, and I'm going to put this very politely, but who looked like you. I know you're proud. You love you're so proud of your South Asian heritage, and know it must've been difficult trying to work towards that goal, not seeing a lot of broadcasters that look like you.

Anish Shroff:

You know what's funny, and I think I give my parents a lot of credit because the one part of this story, which I have told and I have spoken to South Asians about, and I said, the one part of this story that we need to

he made it, he was in the textile business and was exporting the places like Reebok, and he made it, and he started from nothing. While he had some issues in terms of being a parent, because he never knew what that looked like and wasn't the warm, cuddly, fuzzy kind of grandpa, he had never held a child until he held my brother, who was like his third grandkid at the time, third or fourth grandkid at the time and the last one that he saw before he passed away. He held my brother. My dad put my brother in his arms and that was the first time he held a child in his life.

What this man wanted was, he had three daughters, and he said, you guys are going to get educated and I want you all to have an education. He really hammered that home. My mom would tell stories how my grandfather would have all these Longfellow quotes that he would always repeat. He said succeeds and probably saying it wrong is the one who works while his companions sleep. He was this guy who was again, self-made, well-read, and wanted his kids, especially his daughters, able to succeed on their own and not just hitch their future to getting married, which was the custom there. Back in India, you had daughters, you want to get them married. He said, no, I want them to have an education and I want them to be able to sustain for themselves if it comes to that.

Long story with a lot of [inaudible], my mom, au5anion

mom had reached out to me shortly after I got the Panthers job. She said, hey, my son, he's a South Asian, he's of Indian descent, wants to be a sportscaster. He does this little YouTube show. Would you mind being a guest? I said, sure. I was talking to him and I could see the enthusiasm, the curiosity, the sports knowledge, just how much he knew. He reminded me so much of me at that age where you wanted to soak it all up.

We had stayed in touch, the families had, and she reached out to me in the off-season and hey, it would be great if Anique can do something with you again. I said, we get him out to maybe training camp for a day. They came out to training camp and the Jets were having their joint practice with the Panthers, and he's asking Aaron Rogers questions and Bryce Young questions. Totally fearless. I got to meet him and his family in person, and I was so touched because I looked at him and I saw myself, was like, this would've been cool to have this kind of access. If I was at his age, if I had somebody who could have done that for me, and his mom kept on telling me, this means so much, this means so much. I tried not to let my emotions get to me, but it was just such a neat moment. One, you're able to pay that forward, but two, he's got somebody that he can look up to. He's got somebody who is doing something that maybe he wants to do one day.

Again, it's not just me, it's others, but I happen to be there with him on that day. That really touched me that yeah, now there's a chance

ecstatic. We probably would've traded ~~Not that we would've even been in consideration for a college football playoff game~~ but I think our crew probably would've ~~traded~~ that to do the Mayo Bowl.

John Boccacino:

For our audience, if you haven't heard, please YouTube it because ~~you can see~~ these great clips of Anish And Mike Golic and Taylor. Mostly the two in the booth ~~through~~, you're dipping various foods in mayonnaise to see how it tastes ~~There were~~ Oreos that went into there. There was a whole plethora of food. What was your favorite to dunk ~~in~~ the mayo?

Anish Shroff:

PB and ~~easily~~, PB&J.

John Boccacino:

Wow.

Anish Shroff:

Honestly, I didn't know what to expect. PB and J ~~Duke's~~ Mayo ~~was~~ solid.

John Boccacino:

It's something I wasn't expecting to hear for ~~answer~~, but again, ~~we~~ love to get the guests here on the podcast really opening up. Anish, it's really been so much fun to both follow your career from afar, but then also to get to have this conversation here on the Syracuse University podcast. It's been great telling your story. We can't wait to watch you on our TVs and hear you on our radios coming up this fall, this winter, this spring. Your depth of broadcasting, to see what you've been able to accomplish, has been so impressive and yet you're so down to earth, you're so humble. Keep up the great work and always

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