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## Finding Spirituality in a Secular Arena

October 01, 2009 | Eric Brown

With the deadline for his quarterly publication rapidly approaching, Liberty University alumnus Robert Walker needed to act fast. As publisher of “Sports Spectrum,” the country’s No. 1 Christian sports magazine, he was in search of a managing editor. Wanting to relocate the publication from Grand Rapids, Mich., to his sports agency office in Indian Trail, N.C., Walker prayed earnestly for God to send the right person for the job.

Less than 20 miles away, Brett Honeycutt, a Liberty alumnus and sports writer for the “Charlotte Observer,” was praying for a change — not the political or social sort, but a change that would allow him to truly influence the hearts of others.

The prayers of these two men collided in spring 2008. Thinking of those he had met over the years with publication experience, Walker had one name in mind that stood out.

“It was like a light went off — Brett Honeycutt,” Walker recalled.

Although they did not cross paths at Liberty, they met when Walker was athletic director of Charlotte Christian School and Honeycutt was working at the “Charlotte Observer.” Walker remembered Honeycutt as having impeccable character and offered him the position; Honeycutt accepted. Together, the tandem seeks to motivate, encourage and inspire people in their faith through the exciting world of sports.

Highlighting some of the biggest names in athletics, from 2007 Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow to Super Bowl quarterback Kurt Warner, “Sports Spectrum” focuses on more than

records and stats. When searching for stories, Honeycutt and his writers begin by talking to team chaplains, asking them about players whose lives are Christ-centered.

“A story in a secular newspaper might more or less say [Philadelphia Phillies relief pitcher] Brad Lidge is a committed Christian or he is a devout Christian and leave it at that,” Honeycutt noted. “Here, you’re directly asking [athletes] about their faith. They actually get to expound on who they are as a Christian.”

Honeycutt came to Liberty from Charlotte in 1988 and earned a degree in sport management in 1992. At LU, he ran track and cross country under Coach Brant Tolsma, competing in the Penn Relays every season.

Immediately following graduation, Honeycutt journeyed to Czechoslovakia with Athletes in Action, where he was able to run and to share his faith. The experience opened his eyes to God’s plan for his life.

“I wanted to do something where I was helping people or making an impact in some way,” he said.

Honeycutt began influencing young people as a high school coach. In his spare time, he freelanced for the “Charlotte Observer” before landing a full-time position in 1998. Meanwhile, God gradually prepared his heart for his current gig. Now, he combines his love for sports with his desire to reach others for Christ.

“I feel a big responsibility to make sure we’re highlighting athletes who have a story that is going to impact people — whether it’s a believer to encourage them or a non-believer to reach out to them and tell them who Christ is,” he stated.

Walker shares that same responsibility. Since taking ownership of “Sports Spectrum” five years ago, he has expanded the magazine’s content and added evangelistic products, such as sports devotionals, Gospel tracts with NFL schedules and Super Bowl halftime DVDs. With each issue, subscribers also receive a three-month daily devotional.

Graduating from Liberty in 1985 with a physical education degree, Walker went on to earn his master’s in sport management at United States Sports Academy. While serving at Charlotte Christian as an AD from 1988-1994, he also coached basketball alongside former NBA all-star Bobby Jones, guiding the Knights to two state titles.

Jones approached Walker one day, asking the young AD to assist him with various speaking engagements and endorsements. He soon became Jones’ agent.

“I’ve been doing his business now for 20 years,” Walker said.

Jones recommended Walker to four-time NBA all-star and Basketball Hall of Famer David Thompson, who Walker has represented since. In 1994, his part-time work as a sports agent blossomed into a full-time operation known as US Sports. As President and CEO, he primarily

represents collegiate football players looking to sign with an NFL team. Recently, Walker completed his fifth NFL draft, representing 14 pro prospects, including Liberty's Dominic Bolden, Ryan Greiser and Kent Hicks.

"He's a great Christian guy," Greiser said of Walker. "That's really what I was looking for — a guy that was going to be honest with me, help me out and work for me."

In the four years prior to the 2009 draft, Walker helped 14 collegiate athletes reach the pros. He also played an instrumental role in signing undrafted free agent Samkon Gado with the Green Bay Packers, a move that allowed the former Liberty rusher to become a feel-good story during the 2005 NFL season.

"Some people do have the appearance that a sports agent has to lie or has to be deceitful to get the best deal, and that's not true," Walker said. "We're going to work hard and get the best contract for our client, but we're going to do it the right way. I feel like we have a huge advantage because we pray about our contracts and for our players."

Walker now houses US Sports and his publishing company, The Core Media Group, under one roof. In addition to his dual role, he organizes golf charity events and is involved in the With Open Eyes Foundation, providing relief, hope and change to victims of the Sudanese genocide.

"We want to be impacting peoples' lives for Christ and doing something for the Kingdom," Walker said. "Everything we do on the 'Sports Spectrum' side is about that and everything we do on the sport management side is about that."

Fresh out of college, Walker and Honeycutt never saw themselves managing a national sports publication. However, when God drew up a bigger play for their lives, they chose to run His pass route instead of their own. Years later, the duo still follows the Heavenly Father's playbook — using their gifts to glorify His kingdom.

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