

Attestation from Zack Creglow, Regional Sports director for USA TODAY Network

Quite simply, at what Cody Goodwin does, no one is better.

In a wrestling-mad state like Iowa, he does everything you could imagine on the subject. He breaks the biggest news, he routinely produces insightful, engrossing features, he produces an award-winning podcast on wrestling all on his own, and his coverage of women's and girls' wrestling has helped that movement take hold in Iowa. He is the go-to source on both high school wrestling coverage and college wrestling coverage in Iowa. His voice matters on issues.

We talk a lot about personal brands in the media. Cody Goodwin is a brand unlike anyone else in Iowa sports writing. His coverage has a dedicated following. His coverage matters to that community. They know he cares deeply about wrestling. They respect his work ethic. He has connected with that audience in such a genuine way.

Cody's so widely respected in this sphere that he was honored by his peers in recent years as the national wrestling journalist of the year.

Beyond that, in all of Gannett, Cody Goodwin is viewed as one of the company's top sportswriters. Other sports editors at metro newspapers routinely ask specifically for Cody to help with their wrestling coverage at the NCAA championships and he delivers incredible work for them, while balancing his other responsibilities for the Register.

This may be the first time you have heard about Cody Goodwin. It will not be the last.

He'll be a major force within sports journalism for years to come.

Statement of goals by Cody Goodwin

I was at dinner with my parents last weekend. We talked about a lot of things that night. During the conversation I got a phone call from a high school athlete. I glanced at my mom. Go ahead, she said. Answer it.

It was Aiden Riggins, a senior at Waverly-Shell Rock and one of the top wrestling recruits in the country. He said he had made his college decision and wanted me to break the news.

Over the next 20 minutes, I tapped out the story on my phone. I called Riggins back to double-check a couple of things, then posted the story online.

I thought about that night when asked to write out my journalistic goals.

I have many. I want to move to a larger market and cover an NFL team, then become a columnist and longform storyteller, then eventually teach journalism and English as a college professor. Those are the bigger, longer-term goals.

But if I can write candidly for a moment, I'm already living out many of the deeper goals I set for myself when I began this crazy journey more than a decade ago.

There has never been a more trying time to be a journalist. The internet has changed the way we consume news. It is a challenging field to break into. I usually lead with that any time I talk with high school or college classes full of journalistic hopefuls.

But while the way we approach our jobs may be changing, the foundations upon which we do our jobs does not. We get into this business to tell stories, to hold power to account, and to reveal the truth so that the public can stay informed, but we stay to tell stories that matter.

That means telling stories about people, real people and the problems they face, and how, on a daily basis, they try to solve those problems. Those stories connect us to our neighbors and bring us closer to our family and friends.

There are dozens of reasons why people probably shouldn't go into journalism. It can be lonely, the pay isn't great, and we generally only cater to a small portion of the population — believe me, I cover wrestling — but we still find ways to make it happen, and I think it's because we were put on this planet to impact and connect with people.

The best way I know how to do that is by sharing stories — about athletes who have experienced death, tragedy, or even a hyper-competitive loss; about Division I Power Five schools opening new opportunities; about native Iowans winning world and Olympic medals.

I've been covering wrestling at the Register for five years now. That's been long enough to watch high school freshmen grow up and become seniors, and long enough for college athletes to grow up and become coaches. I've engrossed myself in a unique sport that is insanely popular here, and the community has responded by welcoming me in with open arms.

That includes athletes like Aiden Riggins. He and I spent a lot of time together over this past year. I can rattle off his story from memory, but the fact is this: he gives his all to be the best he can be in a sport that matters so much to him, his family, his community and this state, so it is imperative that I do the same.

We connected over the passion we have for our own crafts, which helped form a friendship and working relationship. When it came time to announce something about which thousands of people were curious, he came to me rather than a national outlet that might've reached more people.

Because of that, it was easy to write his story right there on the spot in the middle of dinner. Commitment is the relentless awareness that what you do matters, so it must be done well. (I'm also lucky that my mom is a teacher, so she understands when I told her I must always do right by the kids and athletes I cover.)

When I finally put my phone down, my mom suggested we raise a toast to Riggins and his decision (he's going to be a Hawkeye, by the way). But really, it was a toast

to my goals as a journalist — to show a commitment to the people and communities, that what they do and the stories they share matter, and that their own unique experiences can connect and impact us all.