

The Man Behind the Voice

The story of Greg Damon, the public address announcer for FHN for more than two years shares his story about his current three occupation life as a mechanic, radio broadcaster and PA announcer

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For nearly three years, one thing has remained constant at nearly every sporting event. This one beacon of consistency is Greg Damon, a mechanic, talk show host and uncle known for sparkling personality.

"He's always been my favorite uncle, not being biased or anything," Knightline member Kristina McKay said. "He's always been there for me since I was little. He's a really energetic and fun-loving person, and every time he announces he's very energetic. He's like my second dad."

Damon has made a great impact on others in his personal life, and his fun-loving nature in his broadcasting has earned him thousands of fans of his weekly radio show on KMOX, the Auto Show, and hundreds of fans that come out to support the Knights in their athletic endeavors each home game.

"He does a great job of always sounding excited and into the game, even when the crowd isn't or the team isn't playing well," color guard member Elizabeth Jansen said. "He definitely brings great energy to the games. I also love how he introduces the band and Knightline."

As Athletic Director Mike Janes details, Damon's recognition of every group makes him a valuable part of the sporting experience.

"I think our students like to have an announcer," Janes said. "He tries to get them pumped up. He likes to recognize all groups, like the cheerleaders, the Knightline, the band, stuff like that. Kids like to hear their names called. Parents like to hear their kids' names called. He's great at that."

Though his confident voice and towering presence may make it seem like Damon has devoted his life to PA announcing high school sporting events, that is not the case.

"I'm not a media guy," Damon said. "I'm a car guy. All I've ever wanted to do since I was 13 years old was work on cars."

By trade, Damon is an auto mechanic. He manages Sant Automotive in St. Louis. His extensive career with cars was not the biggest factor in beginning Damon's broadcasting career; rather, it began with a little overconfidence, a lot of luck and knowing the right people in the right places.

The Family Arena

Damon's first experience with radio broadcasting came to him over a decade ago when the Missouri River Otters, a now-defunct minor pro hockey team, played at the Family Arena in St. Charles. During their operation, Damon was in charge of all off-ice operations, including the scoreboard, the statistics, the penalty box. Every so often, his crew would be overstaffed, leaving Damon jobless. On these nights, he would go up to the press box and sit with the radio broadcaster, sometimes even doing color commentary with the regular announcer.

"That's where it all started," Damon said. "I used to listen to the automotive expert on KMOX at the time, and I used to argue with his in my head all the time. I thought, 'This is pretty easy. I could do this.'"

KMOX

Damon did not know that his opportunity would come sooner than he expected. He had a few friends at KMOX whom he played hockey with growing up and kept in contact with. "Out of the blue," as Damon put it, KMOX called him asking if he would be interested in taking over the Auto Show. Of course, he said that he would, and he is still the host of the show 13 years later.

"I must be at least doing something mediocre," Damon said, "but I think what it comes down to is that you have to be honest with what you talk about, you

have to believe in what you talk about, you have to know your material, but most importantly, just be yourself. Don't try to be somebody you're not. Your personality comes out, and that's what brings listeners to you."

Damon notes that he has definitely improved upon his craft in his 13-year career on the radio, but he also acknowledges that he has a long way to go.

"I'm a lot better than I used to be," Damon said, reflecting over his years on radio. "When I first started, I thought I was really good, but when I listen to my first shows, everything I was saying was in superspeed. And you just learn how to talk and again, just be honest and have informative content. I still think I'm crappy, by the way."

The above opinion may not be shared by many, namely those in the FHN audience who listen to him announce their home games week in and week out. It was not always that way, though. Until three years ago, the Knights had a rotating panel of staff members who would volunteer their time to call games over the public address system. This lack of stability is what prompted Janes to approach Damon about the position.

FHN

The two met at the annual FHSD Dance Team Showcase in which all three of the dance teams in the district perform for each other and an audience consisting primarily of family and friends. Damon was announcing the event over the PA because his niece, Kristina McKay, was in the FHN Knightline.

"About four years ago Kristina asked me if I would announce the dance showcase," Damon said. "I'm her uncle, so of course I'm going to do it for her. I decided to have fun with it, and I decided to make it like a basketball game, like, 'NOW, GIVE IT UP FOR YOUR FRANCIS HOWELL...' just to over exaggerate everything and to have fun. I think everyone had a really good time with it."

"The next year, it was actually written out in the script like that. Central's dance team is called the Sensations, so the script said the 'SENSATIONS,' so I did it again and had fun with it. The third year, it was at Francis Howell North. Mr. Janes... asked if I would be interested in doing PA work. That's how it all got started."

While he saw the chance to announce for his niece's high school as a great opportunity, it caught Damon off guard.

"I was kind of taken aback," Damon said. "I try to be a very prepared guy. I can't just walk in and start my job, no matter what it is. I was taken aback by that because I wasn't prepared for that. I was very honored that he would mention me like that. I decided to do it on a trial basis, and I had a great time with it and went from there."

It was a match made in Heaven—Damon's booming voice and FHN's growing athletic program. Now, students, staff and fans all around the school know him simply as the voice of FHN athletics.

"He will always be remembered as the voice I heard when I was nervous before our performances," Jansen said, "but he pumped me up and made me feel less nervous. That is very appreciated."

Many in the FHN community know Damon, and almost all of them know him in a different way.

"He's always been there for me," McKay said, "so it's fun to see him there for everyone else. I'm so glad he got to share these high school years with me. It feels like he pretty much grew up with me here too, as well in life."

Damon tries to keep it as simple as possible. He has one goal—to have fun.

"I hope I bring students to the athletic events," Damon said. "I hope I help them have fun. I aim to make sure that everybody that's at any athletic event has a good time except the opposing team. I just enjoy doing it, and I hope everyone else enjoys it."

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