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Friedman's Dynamic, High-Energy Style Fills Listeners with Enthusiasm

Andrew Dys
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Winthrop's lead against Charleston Southern earlier this week fell to three in the second half. I threw a pillow. I yelled at nobody -- my family had already fled.

I closed my eyes, and Rock Hill's red-headed magician on the radio brought the action into my head on my Fort Mill couch. The 27-year-old, who wanted to be a sports broadcaster since the first grade, when other kids wanted to be firefighters and astronauts, painted word pictures for me and every other radio listener.

"Burton from just outside the arc for threeee!," Dave Friedman squawked.

I thought of him at the Big South Tournament last year, jumping out of his seat during exciting moments. I thought of previous road games, where I have seen and heard opposing fans yell out to Friedman: "Siddown, willya!"

Friedman continued Monday night. "Justin Burton, the freshman, playing for Chris Gaynor after Gaynor went down with an injury, sinks it, and the Eagles are back up six!"

I saw the game with my eyes closed. Dave Friedman, Winthrop's broadcaster. The magician.

Games go on for more than two hours, with tiny breaks. More than 30 games a season. The action continued Monday, and Friedman never stopped talking. Friedman may have come out of the womb with a microphone.

"Burton, another three! And Winthrop is back up nine!"

Friedman doesn't stop until the game is over. After a commercial, Friedman doesn't stop talking until the post-game interviews are done.

After the Charleston Southern game, he packed his radio gear and drove back to Rock Hill. The whole trip home he was thinking about the next game, at UNC-Asheville on Saturday afternoon for first-place in the Big South. On Interstate 26, then I-77, in the dark of a South Carolina night almost 3,000 miles from where he grew up in northern California listening to his idol Bill King announcing games, Friedman was already plotting out the preparation for the Asheville game. It is his life's obsession, and he prepares for games as Patton prepared for battles. Even if the team loses, he must win.

A world of radio and Internet listeners will depend on him, and him alone. There is no TV for the game.

It took hundreds of games -- Syracuse Orange games in college at that prestigious broadcasting school, then baseball for the Charlotte Knights in Fort Mill, then stints in Auburn, N.Y., and Hickory, N.C., and basketball in Vermont and women's basketball in Radford, Va., and more -- to get to this game.

Friedman was picked from seven finalists who wanted the Winthrop job after it opened up before last season, said Jack Frost, Winthrop assistant athletic director for media relations. Friedman's call of a women's game, submitted as a job application, "made my hair stand up on my arms, I was so excited,"

Frost said.

The decision has paid off. Friedman's meticulous preparation, his enthusiasm, has caught on with fans, Frost said.

Fans like me.

I am a junkie. I admit it: I must have my Friedman.

Last year, Winthrop had its greatest season ever. It was Friedman's first season -- he rolled into Rock Hill like a red-haired dynamo. He talked and he talked and he talked.

"The third game of the season, I am sitting five seats down from Woody Durham, the legendary North Carolina Tar Heels announcer, and I am interviewing Roy Williams before the game," Friedman said. "I was 26 years old. I was a year after living with a broken-down car. I had, a year before that night, maybe one decent suit. I thought, 'I am doing what I always wanted to do.'"

He talked all the way to Spokane, Wash., where Winthrop played Notre Dame in the NCAA tournament. Friedman said the immortal words, "Dee -Andre Adams!" when the young man who would soon die in a car wreck brought joy to the country and made plays against Notre Dame.

It was Friedman who uttered the line that will be remembered forever: "Winthrop has won its first-ever NCAA tournament game!"

Friedman had about an hour to bask in the glow. He had to prepare for the next opponent. He had to broadcast how Winthrop got thumped.

I blame Friedman for almost knocking myself out last season. Winthrop was on the road against fourth-ranked Wisconsin. A little more than a minute left. I was upstairs at my house.

"Torrell Martin catches the pass, launches a three, Yesss! And the Eagles are down one!" Friedman shouted a thousand miles from where I jumped up and down. Winthrop got the ball back, and Michael Jenkins took a shot.

"Gooood!" yelled Friedman. "Michael Jenkins, a three, and Winthrop is up two on the road at Wisconsin with less than a minute left!"

Friedman announced the last harried seconds of that game as I flailed around. Friedman told me Wisconsin tied the game on a last-second shot. I accidentally hit myself where I shouldn't.

In my spinning head, on the carpet, Friedman's voice instead of Howard Cosell's voice said, "Down goes Frazier!"

That is what Dave Friedman brings to Winthrop fans. Painstaking preparation and running commentary on the games. Passion. Painful defeats. Joys of victory.

The team drops a dud, loses a game it should win -- it has happened more than once this season -- he still must be at the top of his game. Broadcasters have no wins or losses. But a radio performance that stinks will live forever.

Friedman is studying for a master's degree at Winthrop while handling his paid radio gig for the basketball team. Some big-time professional sports team, maybe a college team in a bigger market with deeper pockets, will probably try to hire him. Friedman said Winthrop is an excellent program and he wouldn't mind staying and calling games for a long while, and maybe teach broadcasting at the school.

Yet, I imagine Friedman will probably be like the coach who single-handedly raised Winthrop from laughingstock to champion, then left last year for riches. Gregg Marshall. Friedman, like Marshall, will be courted because he deserves the dough and the bigger audience. Because he is that good.

Yet, anybody who loves Winthrop should hope Dave Friedman sticks around awhile. His call of a three-pointer as the clock ticks down will stay with you, in the car or on the couch: "Gooood!"