

Local Girl Makes Good;

Cervasio making a big name for herself in Boston

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The 2007 World Series championship trophy rested comfortably at an upscale restaurant recently in Boston. Those lucky enough to be invited to see the trophy in a private showing were able to have their photo taken with the hardware.

For a Boston Red Sox fan, it was indeed a dream come true. And when the fans approached the trophy for a photo opportunity, many asked the very popular Red Sox reporter from the local cable channel, New England Sports Network (NESN), if she would join them for the picture and an autograph.

And Tina Cervasio was more than happy to oblige.

Cervasio, a Nutley native with a strong Belleville heritage as well, has worked long and hard to achieve a level of success in the broadcasting field. And after many years, she appears to have found a home-away-from-home in Beantown.

"New Jersey is always going to be home," Cervasio, the daughter of Joe and Maria Cervasio of Nutley, said. "But I really like it in Boston. It's been a wonderful opportunity to work for NESN and cover the Red Sox."

Most sports fan know of Boston's outstanding success in professional sports, of late. Back in October, the Red Sox claimed its second World Series crown in four seasons. The New England Patriots are in the process of making history, having won its first 14 games of the season (as of last weekend) as it strives for a fourth Super Bowl championship since 2001.

After years of mediocrity, the Celtics appear to be returning to its past glory. Even the Boston Bruins are playing well in the NHL.

"It's really been something special," Cervasio said of Boston's phenomenal sports run. "It's exciting to be a part of it."

Cervasio, 33, was graduated from the University of Maryland in 1996. Ironically, her first job out of college was as the Sports Editor for the Nutley Sun and Belleville Times. She has progressively moved up in the broadcasting ranks, working for the New Jersey Red Dogs of the Arena Football League in 1998 and 1999, hosting an award winning fishing show on cable television, doing updates on WFAN radio, broadcasting the 2004 Summer Olympics and 2006 Winter Olympics for Westwood One Radio and working as a production assistant at the 1998 winter games.

Cervasio also covered sports for CN8 and was the weekend sports anchor for WCBS, Channel 2 in New York. She has also done radio work for a few Super Bowls.

"The Winter Olympics in 2006 was probably my most memorable assignment," Cervasio said of the games in Torino, Italy. "The entire experience was incredible."

Her current job at NESN involves a lot of travel. She covers approximately 150 Red Sox games a season, traveling with the team on its charters.

"I was a newlywed, (having married Kevin McKearney three years ago) and this amazing opportunity to cover the Red Sox came along," Cervasio recalled. "My husband and I knew it would have a huge impact on my career, so I packed my bags with my television clothes and got an apartment in Boston. Kevin stayed in our house in New Jersey to continue pursuing his career goals, because we knew I'd be on the road so much anyway, and on home game nights, I'm at Fenway until midnight sometimes. This distance was difficult. While the job at NESN has been very rewarding and has giving me incredible exposure in the sports broadcasting industry, it's been a challenge on a personal / family level."

One of Cervasio's contemporaries at Nutley High was Steve Politi, who today is a columnist with the Star-Ledger. Like Cervasio, Politi also got his first start in the medium with the Nutley Sun while he was still in high school.

"When I had gotten back to the Ledger and was a general assignment reporter, I ran into Tina at Gold's Gym in Belleville," Politi, who graduated Nutley two years before Cervasio, said. "She was just getting started then, doing whatever local radio stuff she could find, and I was struck by how optimistic she was. Broadcast journalism is an incredibly hard business to break into, yet she didn't seem at all daunted or discouraged by it -- she was just so excited at the possibilities.

"So it was really no surprise to me when I ran into her again, several years later, in the visiting clubhouse at Yankee Stadium. I had moved up to columnist, and she had a job that made her one of the more recognizable faces in the Boston media. We had a great chat about how far we had come -- only she kept on getting interrupted by the Red Sox players. I could tell right away that she already had developed strong relationships with the players she covers every day, no easy task in what is often a contentious relationship. She is doing exactly what she wanted to do when I saw her that day at the gym, and this doesn't have to be her last stop, either. She can take her career as far and high as she wants, but I get the sense she always knew that."

While Cervasio grew up in Nutley, her Belleville roots are quite evident. Her mom and dad were both graduated from Belleville High, as well as her uncle, Al, a Hall of Fame football player for Belleville from 1973 through 1975. Her Godfather is John Senesky, another Hall of Famer, who was a highly successful football coach at Belleville after a standout playing career.

Her uncle, Joe Zarra, was also graduated from Belleville High and today is the Superintendent of Schools in Nutley.

"I grew up in a sports environment and became a sports fan at a young age," Cervasio said. "When I was 11, my family and I went to the Rose Bowl, and I've been hooked ever since."

She has covered the World Series, the Super Bowl and the Olympics. She currently covers, arguably, the most popular baseball team in the Majors, and clearly, the game's best team.

And as Politi said, the sky is the limit for Tina Cervasio, who has paid her dues and is living her dream in the field she loves.

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