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UK Football Messenger

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With the news this week that commonwealth stadium will be rebuilt into a smaller, more intimate venue...the emphasis is on making it more fan friendly. We caught up with one woman who plays a hidden, but important role in keeping fans in the stadium informed and entertained. She walks into the stadium with no fanfare or notice, but what Lisa Schwarze's fingers will do the next 3-hours will be seen by nearly every fan in Commonwealth Stadium.

At a time when more fans are choosing to stay home and watch the game, schools like UK must find ways to give them a reason to show up. Instant information on what's happening on the field is one example of giving fans what they want, and that's where Lisa comes in.

"This is such a new area we're venturing into."

Deep in the bowels of Commonwealth, in the corner of a room, Lisa sits in front of a stenograph machine. It's the same one she uses in her first career as a court reporter.

She uses shorthand based on phonetics, and strikes a key. Unlike a computer keyboard where you hit keys based on spelling, she uses the sound of the word to know which key to stroke.

"This the first sound of my word, here are my vowels, here are the second sounds, this is my numbers, and I combine things, like Commonwealth Stadium is one stroke."

After decades as a court reporter, Lisa has built her speed up to an amazing 250 to 300 words per minute. She is now part of small group of court reporters nationwide who are taking their talents into the sports arena. An hour before kick-off, Lisa is sending messages that appear on the ribbon board at both end zones. Sponsor announcements, player introductions, song titles, and play by play details.

"It's just one opportunity to say, hey you didn't hear it, here you can read it."

Lisa wears headphones so she can hear all the stadium announcements, the referee's microphone, and the music being played. She also relies on a tv monitor to watch the action. For 3-hours, there's no break. Lisa is constantly taking in all that information, and putting it into words that thousands of people see in the stadium...on the end zone message boards, on the concourse tv monitors, and in the suites.

She can literally feel the fan's excitement.

"Oh, I hope that ceiling doesn't come down on me, because you actually kinda feel the vibration that goes with it."

And yes, she's a Wildcat fan...which gives her some liberty with punctuation on the message boards.

"I am allowed to put the exclamation point on, and we do that for every touchdown. Go Cats!"



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