

Chaska Hawks Broadcast Network - The Story

October 3rd, 2020

by Ryan Paul

It started in the fall of 2015, when Ryan Paul, then a freshman at Chaska High School, decided to start following his classmates and their 9th grade basketball teams. Ryan brought his own sound equipment and began doing PA announcing for the home games in the infamous Chaska High School “Aux Gym”. Shortly thereafter, Ryan developed an Excel spreadsheet to track all of the stats for both the 9A and 9B team, and enlisted the help classmates to track and input all of the stats. A few games into the season, the coaches allowed Ryan to begin traveling with the teams. It was at this point that Ryan began writing game preview and recap articles, and posting them to his new blog/website, the *Chaska Freshman Basketball Report*. Likely the first and only of its kind: it was a website dedicated solely to 9th grade basketball. On this website, Ryan featured his articles, stats, schedules, and other pertinent information for avid followers of Chaska freshman basketball.

The next season, in 2016-17, Ryan, now a sophomore, moved up to covering the Sophomore, JV, and Varsity teams on his newly amended website: The Chaska Basketball Report. Ryan continued to write articles and do PA for the Sophomore and JV games, but would then do a live audio broadcast of the varsity game at the end of the night. After realizing the demand for live coverage of Hawks basketball, Ryan started using streaming service “The Cube” to do a live video and audio broadcast of the varsity games. After reaching out to local businesses for sponsorships, Ryan realized what potential his service had. The live broadcasts exploded in the community, and Ryan quickly was reaching over 500 viewers per broadcast. Ryan continued to broadcast every remaining boys basketball game, home and away, during that season.

A major addition during the 2016-17 season was broadcasting boys hockey. Ryan would stream the hockey games on nights when there was not a schedule overlap with basketball. Shortly after the start of hockey broadcasts, fellow CHS students Taylor Hansen and Colin Jacobsen joined the team and broadcast hockey games when Ryan was at a conflicting basketball game. By the end of the 2016-17 winter season, the crew had broadcast roughly 30 games and reached an average 500 viewers per broadcast.

In the summer of 2017, Ryan, a junior, officially changed the name of his service to the "Chaska Hawks Broadcast Network" and it was clear that the new direction of the website would lead to further expansion. Ryan found a larger team of classmates on top of Hansen and Jacobsen that were willing to work for him in production and other areas. This allowed the company to commit to every single boys basketball and hockey game for the winter of 2017-18. Continuing to work with local businesses for sponsorship deals, Ryan was able to provide a payroll to his employees (classmates) and upgrade his amateur equipment into more professional tools. The team, which managed to produce professional looking broadcasts with no education or experience, covered 52 games in the span of 3 and 1/2 months. By the spring of 2018, the number of average viewers skyrocketed to almost 1k per game.

The year of 2018-2019 was Ryan’s senior year, and the final full year of CHBN. While he hadn’t announced it to supporters, Ryan had decided that he would retire from “full time” high school sports announcing after his graduation that coming spring. But the productions continued for that season, and for yet another year, CHBN broadcasted every single boys basketball and hockey game. The team was able to cover a few girls contests as well, which were usually impossible to do because of schedule conflicts. Ryan has many unforgettable memories from his time operating CHBN, but one of the most notable was his first stadium game, when he was in the press box at Mariucci Arena for a rescheduled Chaska vs Benilde St. Margaret’s hockey game. By the time that spring 2019 had rolled around, Ryan and his classmates had covered over 150 Chaska High School athletic events. The team also started a photography extension, and even branched out into a video production company, producing preseason videos and banquet reels for local teams. In the three years of doing live broadcasts, around 150,000 viewers had experienced a Hawks game thanks to CHBN.

Completely self-taught and community-funded, Ryan was able to start as a freshman blogger and eventually provide thousands of people access to high school sports who would not have been able to watch otherwise. Many behind-the-scenes hours of team research, broadcast prep, creating graphics, and so much more would never be seen by these viewers, but the broadcasts were made possible because of the many late nights put in by Ryan, Taylor, and other classmates.

Ryan still lives in Chaska and continues to be involved with Chaska High School athletics. Limited time returns of CHBN may pop up now and again, who knows. To see all of Ryan and the CHBN team’s work, visit WatchCHBN.com and explore the website. Updates on Ryan’s current happenings can be best accessed on his Twitter: [@rypaul21](https://twitter.com/rypaul21).