

# From Fan to Feature: Lisa Horne Reflects On Her Career in Sports Journalism

By Taylor Horne



My mother is my most impressive party trick. After all, there are not many people who have been hit on by the King himself!

She's verified on Twitter, written for FOXSports, met many prestigious athletic figures, and is still featured in many popular radio shows -- all in a man's world. Lisa Horne has broken the standard of what it means to be a sports journalist, what lengths to go to for success, and has driven the force for women to claim their spot in the industry.

## Where It All Began

It all started at her alma mater, the University of Southern California, where she was admitted on the pre-med track. She found that she and organic chemistry did not have a "symbiotic relationship," so she ventured into other options. The many years of higher education following an undergrad law degree didn't appeal to her, so she concluded that a Bachelor of Arts in journalism was her best way to go. "I've always received excellent grades in English, so why not major in something I excel in?" she figured.

It didn't slow down from there. Her passion drove her to chase every opportunity that presented itself to her during her time in the industry, proving herself knowledgeable in competitive sports and a talented writer. Lisa has since garnered a laundry list of qualifications since the conception of her career, including being in the Big 12 College Football Media and the NASCAR Media. She is also on the voting committee for the Lott Trophy, All America Big 12, Nagurski Award, Coach of the Year, FWAA All-American, and has even earned the honor of being one of the few women to vote for the prestigious Heisman Trophy recipient.

“I was driving down to Qualcomm Stadium for a Rams game,” she recalls. “My phone rang, and it was the Heisman Trust. They offered me a vote... for life. I screamed and almost crashed my car!” Lisa insists that on her tombstone, she wants the epitaph to read, “Wife, Mother, Heisman Voter.”

Her most successful article by metric was about the top ten college football mascots. “It was fun to research,” she says, and it paid dividends too; when the article went up, MSN.com picked it up as its lead article. It got 24 million page views in a mere four hours, breaking and still holding the record at FOX.

“Pageviews [clicks] are what drive the money. The more PVs, the happier the big bosses are with you,” Lisa says. While FOX was enthralled with the click revenue, Lisa’s biggest satisfaction was reading about her audience’s amusement in the comment section. “My boss at the time told me that transcribing humor to the written word is the most difficult thing to do: And I nailed it.”

## Her Experience “In The Field”

While these big milestones are rewarding, Lisa takes satisfaction in the small moments as well. When asked about her favorite part of the job, she says that getting to know the student athletes is very rewarding. “You meet amazing kids and some of their stories are never told,” she comments. Regarding the environment, she recognized privacy out of mutual respect in the locker rooms, and it paid dividends. “I would always wait 10 minutes after media were called in for interviews... Give everyone a chance to dress. I think players recognized that and were more likely to talk to me as a result.”

It’s not all excitement when it comes to being in the public eye, however. Lisa confirms that there are moments where the audience oversteps. Everyone feels untouchable behind the safety of a screen.

“A football fan threatened me while I was at FOXSports,” she recalls. “Legal had to step in, and eventually the FBI, because the perpetrator lived in another state. I had to ‘lay low for a few weeks,’ which didn’t sit well with me. Luckily, the perp never bothered me again.” The investigation resulted in her now “fancy blue check,” as she calls it, which is her Twitter verification, the platform she’s most active on.

## A Woman Working in a Man’s World

Despite the speed bumps, many rewarding and memorable experiences have come out of Lisa’s career, both from meeting people and getting to write about them. She’s gotten the opportunity to cover significant sporting events, such as the BCS National

Championship (Auburn v. Florida State) on FOXSports, the Talladega NASCAR race for FOXSports, and the Rams' return to Los Angeles for Sporting News.

In addition, she's been featured on the FOX Nation series *Keeping Up With Jones*, where she was flown to Manhattan, New York to be interviewed by Lawrence Jones surrounding the topic of whether or not NCAA athletes should be paid (*Keeping Up With Jones*, S1 E23). She and her family have also gotten to meet figures of high prestige, such as former USC and current Seattle Seahawks football coach Pete Carroll.

One personal experience that stands out to her was when she got the privilege to sit down with Richard Petty Sr., NASCAR owner and driver, at the Las Vegas NASCAR track.

"The funny part is, he kept putting his hand on my thigh while I was sitting in the chair, while my boss was watching," a mortified Lisa recollects. "When the interview was done, I left and my boss asked, 'Was the King feeling you up?' I sheepishly replied, 'Yes...' He replied, 'That is so awesome. I can't wait to tell the crew.'"

Being a woman in a male-dominated industry definitely has had its moments for Lisa. "The male ego is fragile," she affirms. "Many men do not think females can do a job covering a male sport. Not until I can show them how I can diagram Xs and Os do I get a little respect. Many will not give me any benefit of a doubt."

However, this isn't always the case. Her extensive knowledge of pigskin was what captivated the attention of David Horne, former wide receiver for San Diego State University. She roped him into a hot debate against two strangers regarding a play that went down on one of the sports bar's flatscreens; to their poor demise, he conceded, "She's right, guys." He was so infatuated with her fierceness that on their third date, two weeks later on Christmas Day, David asked Lisa to marry him. She seemed to have had like intentions too on that night, as she claims to have whispered to her friend, "See that man in the camel hair sport coat? I'm gonna marry him," referring to David. They have since been happily married for 28 years.

## Lisa's Final Thoughts

Reflecting on her career as a whole, she comments, "I got married, had kids, and only after they were at least in grade school did I start pursuing my dream." Many people get the ball rolling on their career before they start their domestic life, but Lisa has no regrets: "I may have missed out on some important milestones in my children's lives if I had started my career earlier," she affirms. "I am glad my career ended up the way it did!"

Lisa offers five pointers for incoming professionals: take every initiative, no matter how small; don't be afraid to start in a smaller market, don't live in LA, don't concern yourself too much with the comments section, and scrub all of your social media accounts right before you graduate. "Go back as far as you can, because the internet never forgets. Lives and careers have been ruined over one stupid Instagram post made decades earlier!" she asserts. It's a fair warning: cancel culture is very real and rampant.

Currently, Lisa and I are in the process of rebranding her blog, Pigskin Grind. She is optimistic about potentially starting a podcast dubbed the same name in due time, so she can continue to commentate on sports as her passion.