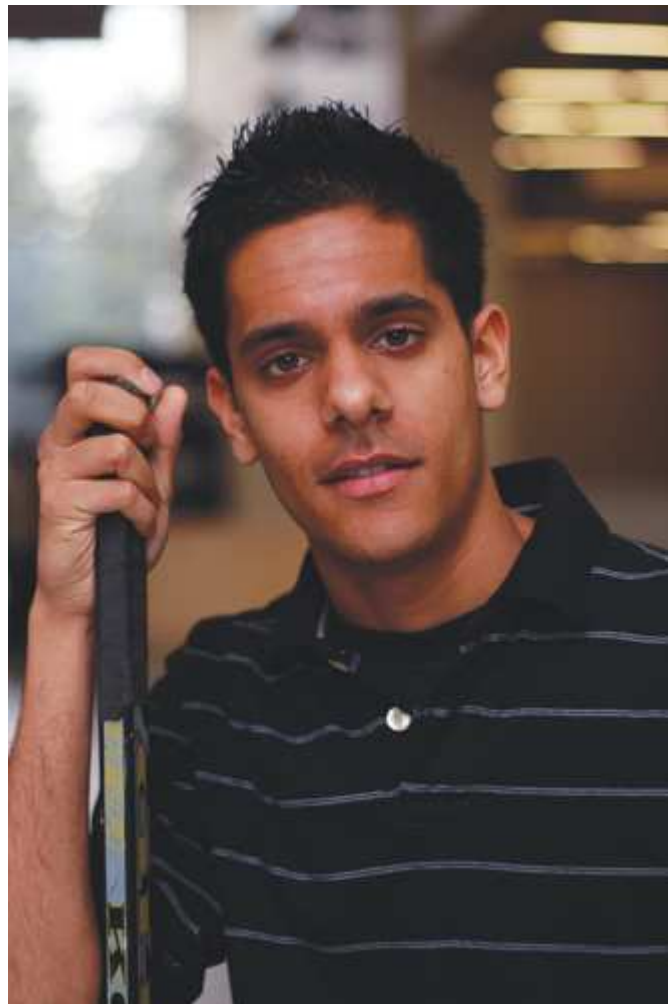


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Passion for puck, pen and paper

Student's love of writing takes him from Canucks games to j-school

by Allison Render



Farhan Devji, a first-year journalism student, combines his love of hockey and writing as a sports journalist (C.J. Roussakis)

Farhan Devji has always been a hockey fan and a hockey player, but when he realized he wasn't going to make it to the NHL, he switched his passion to writing.

Although the first-year journalism student from Vancouver didn't start writing about hockey until a few years ago, he has already written for several hockey websites and has published a novel.

"I love writing and I love hockey . . . I guess writing about hockey is a way for me to combine my two passions," he says.

He began by writing editorial pieces on the Vancouver Canucks for insidehockey.com. In Grade 11, in his last year of Midget B hockey, he started writing for his school paper. The year after, he became the paper's sports editor.

Devji says one of the hardest things to do when he was starting out was finding credible places to write online. After e-mailing several people about writing opportunities, he came across InsideHockey.

"There's tons of little blogs and websites, but a lot of them don't have much credibility. Writing for them may be a good experience, but it won't help you when you're looking for a job in the future," he says.

This past summer he covered the Tampa Bay Lightning prospects camp in Victoria, B.C.

"It was the best experience of my life so far," he says. "We were basically professional journalists for two days. That experience reassured me that this is definitely what I want to do."

In Vancouver, Devji mostly covered the Canucks, writing pieces on the younger players and the prospects who were still in the junior leagues. He also covered the Vancouver Giants, a major junior hockey team and the BCHL, a junior A hockey league.

Devji is also editor-in-chief of canucksfanz.com. The site's tag line reads "True Canucks Fanaticism."

Devji describes himself as "borderline obsessive" about the Canucks.

"It's definitely my biggest passion in life . . . I don't see that changing anytime soon, even though I've moved to Ottawa."

Not surprisingly, he plans to attend when the Canucks come to Scotiabank Place in February. However, he hasn't been writing about the Senators. Instead, he says he wants to focus on the Ottawa 67s, and has also written for the Charlatan.

While Devji has mostly focused on journalistic writing, he is also a published author.

In November of his Grade 12 year, his creative writing teacher gave him a daunting assignment: write a 50,000 word (175 page) novel in one month.

Devji completed it, creating a story that focuses on a teenager growing up in Alberta who wants to make it to the NHL. In writing the novel, he says he drew on his childhood experiences in playing hockey and from growing up on his father's farm.

When he finished the project, he didn't think it had much of a chance of being published, but he submitted it anyway. In January, he heard from Cacoethes Publishing, telling him they were interested in publishing his novel. Over the next six months he went through a long editing process with several editors. In July, the novel was published. Devji says he wants to write another novel in the future, but doesn't have the time to work on one now.

While Devji would ideally like to move back to Vancouver and write about hockey for a local or national newspaper, he says he knows that's not realistic for a student coming straight out of university.

"I'll go wherever the job takes me. I just want to be a sports journalist and if I can find a job that will allow me to do that, I'll be open to pretty much going anywhere."