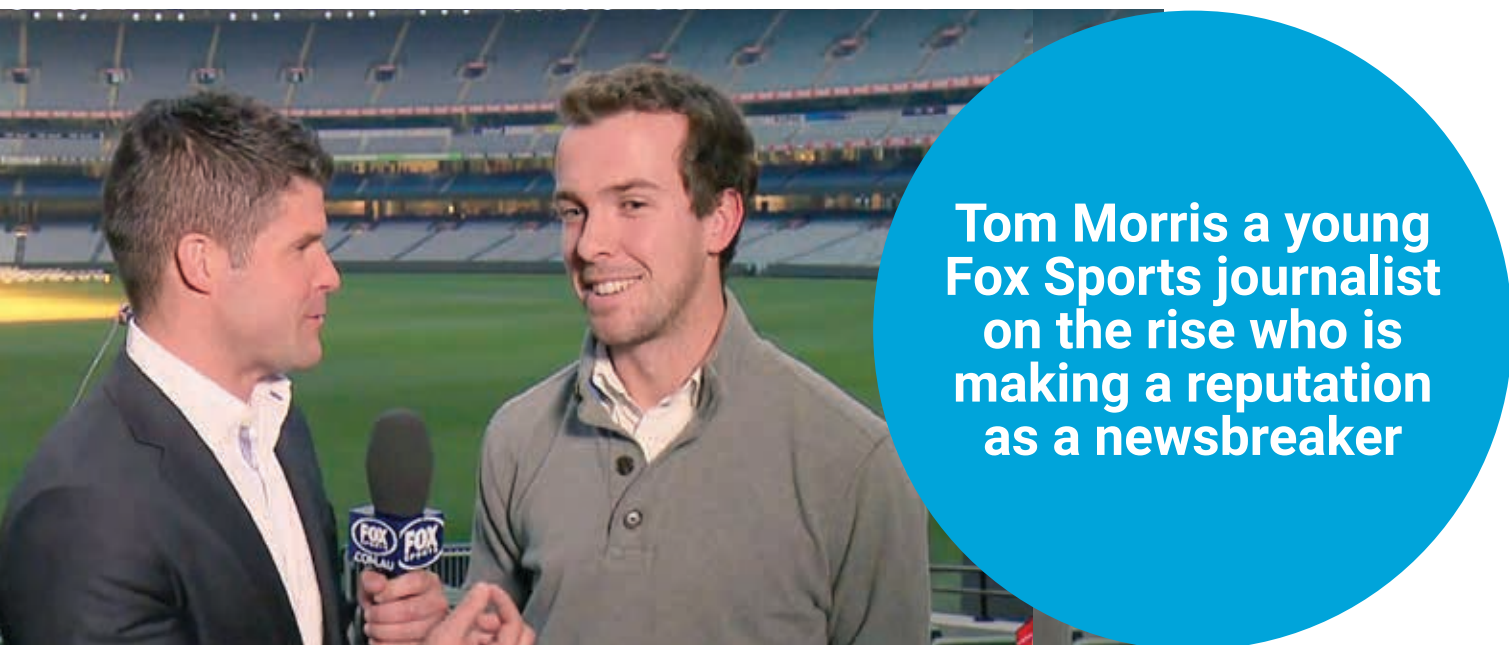


A Journalist on the Rise

Fox Sports journalist Tom Morris prides himself on breaking news accurately. But the former cricket star has had an interesting road in making it to the big time. **James Maxwell** caught up with the young journalist to find out more about his journey and what the future has in store.



Tom Morris a young Fox Sports journalist on the rise who is making a reputation as a newsbreaker

Choosing the career path you want isn't so straightforward for most anymore. For Tom Morris, he knew he wanted to be a journalist from the age of 12. But his pathway into journalism wasn't so direct.

When Tom finished Year 12 in 2009, he didn't have the grades to jump straight into journalism, so he enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts at Melbourne University. In 2010, Tom decided to defer his studies and head to England for six months to play cricket.

During this time, Tom weighed up his future in Arts to decided once and for all whether or not he should pursue his journalism dream. When Tom walked through the arrival doors at Melbourne airport, he knew he wanted to become a journalist. But getting into the industry was another challenge.

From there, he enrolled in a journalism degree in 2011 which he finished in 2013.

"You might think my pathway to where I am today was straight forward, but it certainly wasn't," Morris said. "I was very lucky when I got back from England, all my ducks fell into place for me".

But along his journey Tom suffered some minor setbacks. Throughout the course, a lot of his mates were obtaining internships or other voluntary work, which hurt Tom.

"Those setbacks push you further behind, but they make you want to work harder," Morris said.

But throughout his course, he did eventually receive some unpaid work, boosting his credentials for when he finished the course in 2013.

Tom's first post-graduation job offer came from the St Kilda Football club to be the clubs digital coordinator. He excitedly accepted and it was a role he thoroughly enjoyed.

During his time there, he was able to interview a number of high profile stars, including Nick Riewoldt, Lenny Hayes and Robert Harvey.

Before an interview with Nick Riewoldt, Tom was as nervous as he had ever been, even more nervous than having to face Scott Boland during his cricket career.

But he said that after getting that first interview out the way, it just became more natural for him.

"After that initial interview, it was quite daunting," Morris said. "But the more experience I got, the more I just ask those 'dumb' questions, because I know I'm just doing my job."

Tom then became the senior football writer for the club, before being offered a job at Fox Sports in late 2015. Tom balanced his workload with playing 1XI premier cricket for St Kilda at the same time. A quality wicket keeper-batsman, Tom appeared to have the talent to sustain a future at that level. But Tom had to make a hard decision to give up cricket to ensure he could devote all his time to his new job at Fox Sports.

A Journalist on the Rise

Tom started at Fox as a football and cricket writer during their respective seasons. Tasked with the job to break stories, write analysis pieces on teams and players, and provide content production for other colleagues at the station. Tom says the best part of working for Fox is being able to meet famous people, but not for the reason everyone thinks.

"Networking is not to just go out and meet famous people," Morris said. "It's getting out there to understand the industry that little bit more."

Tom understands his role at Fox and quite enjoys it, but he can be an opinionated person. Tom says he would like to spend as much time breaking stories as he possibly can, purely because he gets the most satisfaction out of it.

Within his job, Tom always encounters setbacks such as not being able to break a story. But when he does get the opportunity to break the story, it feels just the little bit better. Tom remembers trying to break a story about David Saker becoming the new bowling coach for the Australian Cricket team.

"I heard wind that it was going to happen, so I confirmed it with a source, posted it and it was right," Morris said. "But Australia's media manager was scathing of me because they wanted to break it not me".

These are the challenges in Tom's role and make you question your job description.

"This sort of situation can give you mixed emotions," Morris said. "But to me, I didn't care. I broke the story first and I did my job".

When asked whether he would like to be the next Mark Robinson through voicing his opinion, Tom gave an insight into his current position in the industry.

"Right now, people don't really care what I think," Morris said.

The desire to write opinion articles is there, but Tom knows he needs to build his credibility up just like Robinson did when he started. But it doesn't stop Tom trying to voice his opinion in any interview he does. Asked about whether journalists, himself included, were ethical in their reporting, Tom summed up his feelings on the matter.

"It's about holding authority to account, which we do quite well, so, we do act ethically," Morris said. "It's about holding authority figures accountable for their actions, which we generally do quite well, so, we do act ethically."

"I would like to be perceived as someone who works hard, is proactive, talkative, friendly," Morris said. "Someone who has vigour and wants to get out there, meet people and put his neck on the line for a story."

Every time Tom is writing a story, he thinks back to something Caroline Wilson once said.

"The best stories are the ones that make you feel sick in the stomach," Morris said. "If you write a story that no one else has, it makes you feel sick because you are the only one who has it and because you know it's true, but you hope it's true."

When Tom was saying this, the tone of his voice changed into one of a passionate, fiery journalist, hungry to find the best stories out there. But like all journalists, Tom has made his share of errors, especially spelling mistakes.

"You are embarrassed about at first, but you simply apologise and no one remembers it afterwards," Morris said.

Throughout Tom's relatively short career, he has already acquired a lot of experience. Prior to his professional career, Tom was inspired by Clinton Grybas and Gerard Whateley.

Working at St Kilda and Fox Sports, two journalists mentored him and helped him get to where he is today.

The first is Luke Holmesby. When at St Kilda, Luke showed him how to become a modern day journalist and quickly learn the ins and outs. At Fox Sports, his current mentor is Jake Niall, most commonly known as 'The Claw'.

An old school journalist, Jake has shown Tom the old fashioned way of writing and reporting. Sitting across from Jake has meant Tom can pick his brain at any time. Tom believes having the combination of an older and younger mentor has benefited in molding his views and opinions.

Given the variety of his articles and the diversity of topics, Tom cites his best work as a feature on Tim Membery, a breaking story on Jamie Elliott being sidelined for a season, and Justin Leppitsch's sacking 30 minutes prior to the press conference.

At only 26 Tom has experienced the full spectrum of the industry.

"If journalists don't get a story, it makes you feel flat," Morris said.

But Tom is happy to share his wisdom to any young, up and coming journalists.

"Be bold. Don't be afraid to be knocked back and to be criticised," Morris said. "That's my main advice."

Tom has been bold with his career to date and he will certainly continue to be, breaking stories now and well into the future.