

The man behind the microphone

"Skip" has brought out the Lancers since 1996

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JACOB PUTERKO | THE ROTUNDA

Acting as the PA announcer for Longwood athletic events, Carlton "Skip" Maynard Spain has seen the transformation of a campus, five different athletic directors and the growth of the Longwood athletics department altogether.

The Colonial Heights, Va. native moved to Farmville in 1988, where he announced his first Longwood athletics event in the spring of 1996. Longwood, a Division II program at the time, hosted the Carolinas-Virginia Athletics Conference baseball tournament with Hampden-Sydney College.

"When I was asked to do baseball, Coach Buddy Bolding, our longtime baseball coach, his wife was the announcer for baseball and she couldn't do it that weekend, so that's when Jack (Williams) called and asked if I wanted to do it, and I told him 'yeah I do,'" said Spain.

Announcing for the Lancers ever since with over 90 games per year, Spain recalls the athletic field transformations as well throughout the program's history.

"Where the maintenance facility is (behind Iler Hall) was the field hockey field, but it was not the legal size for the NCAA, so (for) field hockey we had to use the University of Richmond field as all of our home games," said Spain.

Spain also remembers how the Lacrosse team used to either play at the field located on First Avenue, or on the practice field behind Longwood's softball stadium, Lancer Field,



"Skip" says that in his 24 years of announcing, he's probably only ever missed three games.

"Skip" announces the women's basketball game against High Point, while Longwood tries to make a

and even when the conditions were rough he was still there.

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Carlton "Skip" Spain (Longwood Athletics Public Address announcer)

Spain works as the public address announcer on a volunteer basis and yet the dedication has not subsided.

"He could be at home spending time with his wife or spending time with his kids, or just spending time at home," said Director of Athletic Events Jamal White. "We try our best knowing that and appreciating everything he does for us because if it wasn't for him we don't know what we would do, trying to find somebody new, somebody who is going to be consistent to be a PA person."

Spain has always had a connection with baseball, as he played for four years at Virginia State University, while also playing football on scholarship.

Prior to college, Spain enlisted in the Air Force, then after college worked full time in the National Guard.

"When I was in the Air Force I had a job of making maps and that indirectly affected what was going on in Vietnam," said Spain.

Even though Spain was working to have an impact on the war through his service, the love of sports never left him as he played football and baseball while serving in Germany.

In his time in the National Guard, Spain worked as an Operation Sgt. Major in which he served during Operation Desert Storm spending six months abroad during the crisis. Spain then retired from the Guard in 1994.

Upon retiring, he wanted to get into the

teaching field, and that he did, teaching physical education and sixth grade math at Cumberland High School for 15 years.

Through all of these different ventures and experiences, sports has always been a constant. Part of his experiences in sports has landed him to meet some of baseball's legends.

"In where I'm from (Colonial Heights) they have a little league tournament every August, and back in the 50s, 60s and 70s they would have a celebrity to come throw out the first pitch, and it was my dad's job to drive to the airport and pick them up," said Spain. "Once I became driving (sic) he let me take them back to the airport. I took Mickey Mantle back to the airport."

The experience with Mantle was something Spain will never forget, he said.

Spain went on to drive other legends Warren Spahn, Satchel Paige and Hank Aaron all in his 20s to the tournament.

The way Spain carries himself in a work setting is something that has resonated with coaches at Longwood.

"He is a consummate professional in what he does, you can tell with the passion that he exudes on the mic," said men's soccer head coach John Atkinson. "He has found his niche with the announcing and you can tell that he gets great joy from being apart of the successes behind the mic at Longwood and being able to announce these athletes to the world."

Adding to his vast experiences, Spain also spoke about the run of continued success from the Longwood softball program, a run featuring the Lancers clinching three straight Big South Championships from 2015-2017, one of which came on the team's home field in 2017 - a tournament and championship that Spain was able to announce.

"Skip has been so service oriented since I've known him, that's the first thing that really comes out to me. It wasn't like I had to go ask him for help, he actually came and asked us all the time 'hey do you want me to run the scoreboard, hey do you want me to drive you guys?'" said head coach Kathy Riley.

After all of this time as a member of the Longwood community, he keeps taking it all in.

"Watching the campus grow, it is unreal," said Spain.