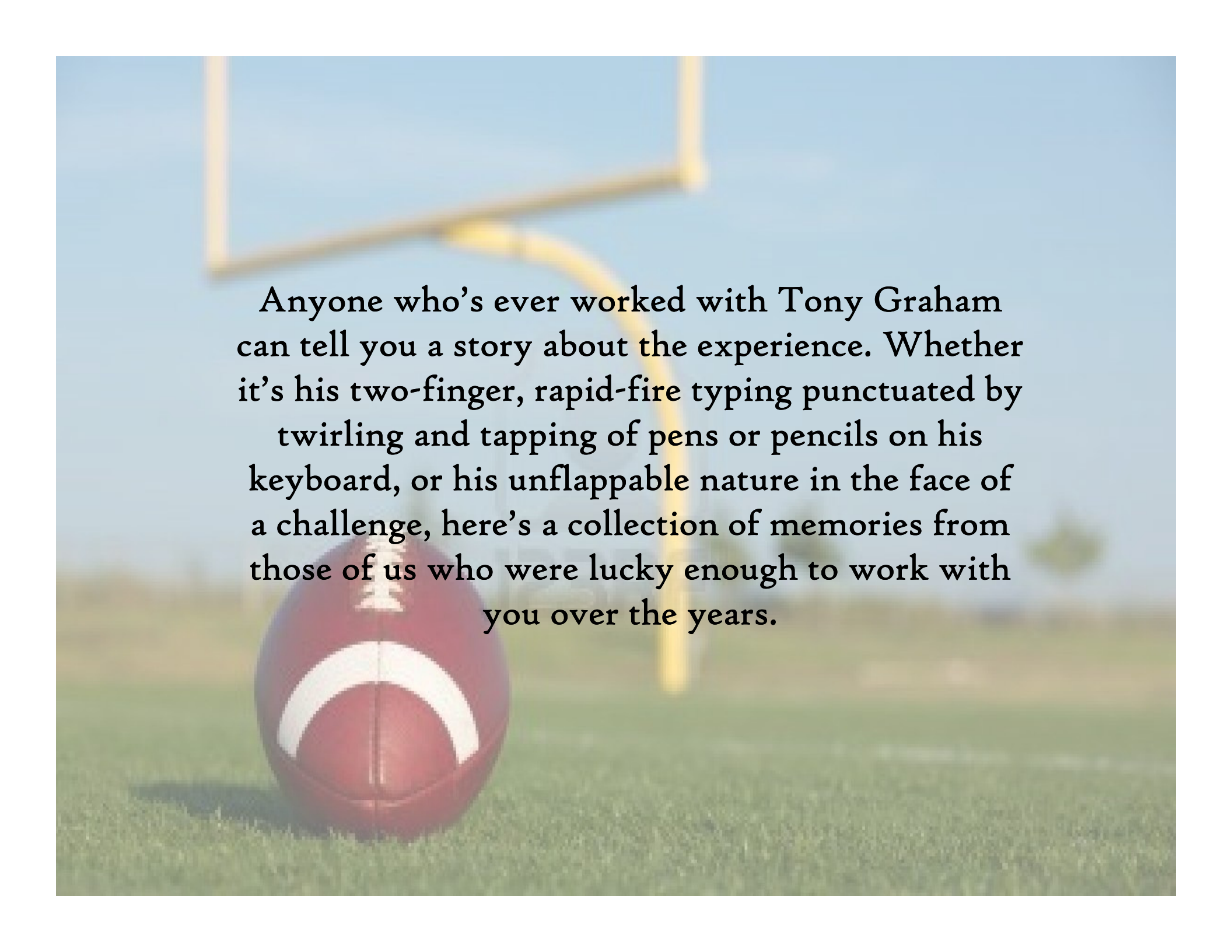


THE BEST OF TONY GRAHAM!



Brad Penner photo

A photograph of a football field. In the foreground, a maroon football with white stripes is on the grass. In the background, a yellow goalpost is visible against a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Anyone who's ever worked with Tony Graham can tell you a story about the experience. Whether it's his two-finger, rapid-fire typing punctuated by twirling and tapping of pens or pencils on his keyboard, or his unflappable nature in the face of a challenge, here's a collection of memories from those of us who were lucky enough to work with you over the years.



Tony's 1995 headshot

Every football player and coach and fan in the Shore knew Tony Graham. It was amazing to watch the buzz on the sideline when Tony strolled onto the field. If Tony is here -- This must be a **BIG GAME**.

It was amazing that he had such a positive effect on the game despite wearing that Phillies jacket.

-- Bob Grace, former Point Pleasant Beach athletic director

Tony offered me a job at the Press in September of 1977 as I was entering my senior year at Neptune High School. For the next five years, I had the privilege to sit near Tony and go to games with him on many a night. Tony always had time for a young, enspring journalist who looked up to him as the Jersey Shore version of Marv Albert and Howard Cosell mixed in one. I pestered him with questions constantly and Tony even told me once time that "I nagged him more than his ex-wife." But it was because I was always so excited to be around him, it was being with Jersey Shore sports royalty. Tony's enthusiasm for what he was doing, whether it was covering high school sports, the Jersey Shore Summer Basketball League or the Phillies was unmatched. Tony didn't exactly follow the rule of "no cheering in the press box" but that's because he so much enjoyed being part of a big event. His tape recorder was always at the ready

and I loved to listen in on his post game interviews to learn how to ask a great question.

One night I was sitting across from Tony in the sports department on the second floor newsroom of the old Asbury Park Press building in Asbury Park. As Tony was twirling his pens and typing in his Tony-only two-finger style, he kept singing the Pablo Cruise song "What You Gonna Do When She Says Goodbye" over and over with the "Duhhh, duuuh daaa, dunnt-tah" parts. To this day, whenever I heard that song, I think of Tony.

Another song I remember Tony singing over and over one night in the newsroom was "I love the Nightlife" the 1978 song by Alicia Bridges. He kept doing the "Oh, I ... Ohhh I ... I love the nightlife, I got to boogie on the disco 'round, oh yea" over and over.

-- Stan Goldstein

Joe Adelizzi and I were talking one day about how to describe Tony. Among the many adjectives we came up with, we decided "unique" might be the best way to describe him. Forty-plus years later, the best way to describe Tony is "A Jersey Shore legend."

-- Stan Goldstein



The first time I ever met Tony was at the old Toms River Bureau located near the high school/courthouse. It was a weekend day, and I, of course, was working on the Dining Guide. He was covering a sporting event at Toms River High School on Hyers Street. The building that housed that TR bureau office (and there were many) is no longer there. Through the years, Tony & I had spoke on and off with a hello in passing. Clare and I split running the lottery pool, and Tony always wanted to make sure he had enough money in the envelope in case he wasn't at the office, when the next day, we might "win big" - Of course, we only hit big once with a \$125 prize years ago. I'd front him money if he didn't have enough in his advance payment envelope, knowing that he was "good for it." While I haven't been at the Press in a year and a half, I will always think of Tony as a kind man.

-- Ronna Weinberg

Covering a game with Tony is always an adventure. I was forever being asked to pull him out to the numbers at a football game. There was one rainy day covering a Brick game that stands out. Tony, being made of marshmallow, retreated to the press box. I stayed on the field. After the game I'm asking Tony what stat totals he had. Our numbers were 40 or 50 yards different. I said, "Tony, your numbers are way off." He turns to me, raises his voice five octaves and says to me: "Z, I may be wrong, but I'm official."

-- Joe Zedalis



Tony's penchant for wandering onto the field was a pet peeve of some photographers. One Saturday afternoon in September 2000, we got the above photo from Pete Ackerman, with this caption:

"This is your Manasquan game photo. maybe you guys can train Tony Graham to keep four or five feet onto the field during the plays."

The blur in front of the play, of course, is Tony.

One of my favorites, courtesy of the late Bill Handleman. To appreciate this story you have to understand that Tony is rarely without a hat on his head.

Many years back Tony and Bill were invited to John Amabile's house. I believe Bill was writing a column and Tony was doing an advance for an upcoming game.

John Amabile, as many of you know, was a bigger than life character so, of course, his family pet was a Great Dane.

Soon they settled down to begin the interviews. What Tony didn't know, but the dog knew, was that hats are not to be worn indoors. So the Great Dane took it upon himself to remove the hat from Tony's head. Fortunately the hat didn't get removed along with the hat. Always the pro, Tony never missed a beat and the interview continued.

-- Bob Foxworth

Tony working on his weekly Saturday morning high school football column. "Tony, how's it going? When are you going to be in?" Tony: "I'm waiting for John Amabile (then coaching Neptune) to get to his second bottle of wine, then I'll call him. He's so much better than."

Good luck to Tony in retirement.
-- Joe Sullivan



Tony's Asbury Park Press headshot from 1987

The Monmouth University men's basketball team was in the midst of a wild comeback from a 16-point deficit at Wagner College's dingy, dank, dark Sutter Gym, a place that was a house of horrors for Monmouth. In the final minute, Tony got so excited he kicked out the wires of WMCX, Monmouth's student station, knocking them off the air. Those who were listening to that game did not hear William Lewis' game-winning basket. A couple of days later, Wayne Szoke, who loved to bust Tony's chops and is one of Tony's closest friends, said to Tony, "You have a way of endearing yourself to people."

March 1996, NEC Tournament Semifinal: It looked like another year where Monmouth was going to fall agonizingly short of making the NCAA Tournament. The Hawks were down five in the final minute when John Giraldo hit a 3-pointer from downtown Poughkeepsie. Then, with Marist up 3, Mustafa Barksdale nailed a 3 while getting fouled with 7.1 seconds left. Tony leapt out of his chair in excitement. I admit I did, too. Monmouth won the game, 57-56. Four days later, it beat Rider, 60-59, at Boylan Gym and had its first trip to the NCAAs.

-- Steve Falk



Tony Graham works the phones at WJLK Radio in 1973.

When I was in school, EVERYONE in the Jersey Shore high school sports area knew who Tony Graham was. I remember being at high school basketball games and people in the crowd getting excited because "Tony Graham is here!"

When I started at the Press in Asbury Park as a senior in college, doing obits on the weekend, sometimes I'd be the only person in the newsroom besides sportswriters and radio newscasters. I'd see Tony come into the office and was so excited to see a celebrity. As I came to find out, Tony was hardly the stereotype of a celebrity. He was friendly and welcoming, and such a down-to-earth guy. Over the next few decades, every time Tony passed by my desk he always had a big smile and a "Hi Claresie!"

On his last day, I was busy at my desk and didn't know they had cake and a mini party for him up in the conference room. He came to the back of the office and stopped by, telling me to go and get some cake. I asked where, and Tony said, "You know, up in the cake room!" Made me smile once again.

-- Clare Connors McDowell

Although I worked at The Press for 10 years, I worked most with Tony during my stint in the old Asbury Park newsroom when I was a beat reporter for City Zone. My desk was on (and faced) the main pathway from the front stairs to the rear set of desks that was the sports department, so he had to pass my desk coming and going. I can't remember any particular story, just that he always had a word or a smile or a smart teasing comment to share. He was funny and energetic (don't think he's changed much in that department). I never saw him crabby or depressed, no matter how intense it got in the newsroom or in the radio booth. Just a really nice person, always upbeat, never missing a beat (or a detail...)...you couldn't be crabby around him.

-- Deena Welde



Tony Graham with the “Rally Roundtable” crew in 2007: Joe Adelizzi, Sherlon Christie and Steven Falk.

Tony's two-fingered, rapid-fire typing led to all kinds of fun mistakes in stats, such as these gems that were shared in sports department messages ... and saved in a file full of fun typos:

This guy hasn't been drafted by the NFL yet? Nikc Spataro (So., RB, 70008 yards, 9 TD); (WALL, 11/08/01 22:13)

"That was Mirthcvell's 2100th casreer goal,". if you run this through the Tony decoder it will read: "That was Mitchell's 200th career goal" (WALDEYER, 1/15/03 21:00)

wrong.. that was his 100th career goal!!!.. yu culdn't tell.

(TONY G, 1/15/03 21:06)

tony brought it to my attention that i incorrectly decoded his sanskrit. it was actually the kid's 100th career goal.

(WALDEYER, 1/15/03 21:08)

When they taught math in school, Tony must have not been paying attention or was asleep. The only math Tony could do was he knew a basket was worth two points, and then eventually could be worth three points, and a free throw was worth a point.

However, when it came to doing football statistics: Tony was not always accurate. 3 and 3 is 6, 8 and 8 is 18. Those of us who have worked with Tony have all heard him trying to add his football statistics out loud.

But to those of us who were at one time new to football statistics Tony always had this to say: "I may be wrong, but I am official."

-- Steve Falk

My senior year of high school, fall of 1977, Neptune is playing Wall Township in soccer on the Wall High School football field. The north end zone there backs up against Route 138. During the game I look out and see police cars with flashing lights behind an accident. Later that night, Tony tells me he was slowing down on Route 138 to look at the scoreboard to see the score; he apparently slowed right down in one of the lanes and someone plowed into the back of his car. He wasn't hurt but the back of his car got pretty beat up.
-- Stan Goldstein



Tony Graham accepts plaque as he's inducted into Gridiron Classic Hall of Fame at the 33rd annual U.S. Army Gridiron Classic Football game in July 2010.

Photo by Peter Ackerman

The heart of the 2001 NJSIAA Baseball Tournament was centered in the Shore's best baseball town: Toms River. Toms River East and Toms River South both had state championship contenders.

Toms River East, coached by Bill Frank and led by catcher Colin Gaynor and a 7-foot-1 right-handed pitcher named Ryan Doherty, who was known as "The Big Unit" because of his height, but who Tony, in one of his infamous typos, once called "Bug Unit."

Toms River South, coached by Bill Frank's legendary older brother Ken, was led by pitcher/outfielder Jeff Frazier and had a freshman on the team named Todd Frazier.

Thanks to APP scholastic editors Joe Zedalis and Karen Wall and Observer sports editor Dave Biggy, Tony and I adopted the plan of alternating when it came to covering Toms River East and Toms River South's games in the state tournament. One day, I would cover Toms River East and he Toms River South and the next state tournament day, we would switch.

We had both just mastered how to use cell phones and would call each other with updates and then relay them to the Frank brothers.

The first Friday of the state tournament, Tony was at Toms River South and I was at Toms River East. Toms River South won easily. Toms River East was trailing a very good Cherokee team by a run in the sixth. Colin Gaynor is at bat with the bases loaded and two out -- the big moment in the game. My cell phone rings (typical Tony timing). I don't answer because I want to watch the at-bat and capture all the drama for the non-Pulitzer prize story I would eventually write. I knew Gaynor was going to get a hit. Tony keeps calling and calling. I keep not answering.

Gaynor gets the hit to put Toms River East ahead. I finally call Tony back. This time, he doesn't answer because he was busy doing his interviews. It's not until

after the Toms River East game ended that Tony and I get in touch with each other and I tell him about Gaynor's hit.

But, that whole state tournament was fun. Toms River East and Toms River South kept winning. And Tony and I kept serving as the relay men to Ken and Bill Frank to tell them how they were doing. Every time I see Bill Frank he brings up how Tony and I kept them in touch with how the other was doing.

For the record, Toms River East won the Group IV state title. Toms River South lost in the Group III state final. And Tony and I got to see both games because the games started at different times.

-- Steve Falk

Tony kept me on my toes (and frequently made me laugh) as I edited his copy, because you never knew what gems would make it into his copy. A selection of my favorites is at the end of this packet.

But Tony and I also shared a love of fishing, though he preferred freshwater to the salt. One day in 2001, after months of discussion, he and I fished together at Manasquan Reservoir, then wrote dueling columns about the experience for Hook, Line & Sinker. I still remember him making fun of my tackle box in the column ... and with good reason, as it was overflowing with shiny lures ... and I wasn't catching a darn thing!

-- Karen Wall



Left: Tony with a nice bass he caught in 2011. Below: Tony rigs a shiner during the day he and I fished at Manasquan Reservoir. My well-appointed but unsuccessful tackle box is in the background.



leading the Seraphs (2-1, 1-0) to a Class B Central victory over the Garden Gulls (1-2, 0-1).
(A new species of gull?)

"Each game is tough now, it's winner go home," said Manser.
(Uh, yeah, that is tough)

"That play was wide open," said Serafino. "One guy to beat, I had to sprint downfield, I wasn't looking back. I was getting to the pile on and win the game."
(Shouldn't he get to the end zone before he thinks about celebrating?)

a breakaway pass from Christine Mongelli in the 61st minute spelled deafat for Shore
(It spelled something for sure ...)

"Because I'm a tall pitcher, like Randy Johnson," said Doherty of the 6-10 Arizona Diamondbacks left-hander, the 2001 Cy Young Award winner with the similar nickname of "Bug Unit."
(Maybe he looked like a praying mantis?)

CLASSIC TONY TYPOS

I had a file I kept of Tonyisms that still takes up a spot in the Asbury Park Press computer system. These are some of the gems.

-- Karen

from tony g: Red Cank Catholic.
I like the disgusting sound of that.
(Dan Cichalski)

Accomplishments: A 5-foot-9 guard, Herring has led his team to three straight victories ... the longest winning steak for the Huskies since March 1996.
(mmm, I'm hungry now)

Pizzulli drove in a second run, walking with the bass full.
(He's obviously thinking about fishing here)

with a four-four-four day including a three-run home run home
(that's some day at the plate)

David Hand scored on runs of 49 and two years
(This one drew a response from John Geiser: Karen: Caught your note on the two-year run. The guy must have started in Anchorage.
(GEISER, 10/13/02 20:37)



Enjoy your family, your fishing, your Phillies and your retirement, Tony! You'll be missed on the sidelines, in the pressbox and in print!

Tony interviewing Domonic Brown at Phillies spring training in 2010.

Brad Penner photo