



techlife

techlifemag.ca

RINGSIDE

FOR THE FINAL MOMENTS
OF LIFE AS A PRO WRESTLER

CHANNEL CHANGERS

MEG MORRISON AND
FOUR OTHER GRADS
REDEFINE THE TV CAREER

HOW TO SEE
CANADA BY BICYCLE

NAIT BAKERS
GO FOR GOLD **IN PARIS**



THE FINE ART OF THE
TRADES P. 26

UNCONDITIONAL
CRITTER CARE P. 30



LIVING WITH THE
GOLDEN AGE
OF
TELEVISION

STORY BY
SCOTT MESSENGER
PHOTOS BY
**BLAISE VAN MALSEN
& JEANETTE SESAY**



FEATURED ALUMNI

Cheryl Dalmer, Radio and Television '79
Tyson Dolynny, Radio and Television '16
Su-Ling Goh, Radio and Television '98
Liam Johnson, Radio and Television '15
Meg Morrison, Radio and Television '04
Brandon Rhiness, Radio and Television '00
Perry Thomas, Radio and Television '85

FOR VIEWERS, TELEVISION HAS NEVER BEEN BETTER.
FOR INDUSTRY MEMBERS AND HOPEFULS, THE PICTURE IS LESS CLEAR.
HERE'S HOW MEG MORRISON AND FOUR OTHER GRADS
ARE TAKING CONTROL OF THEIR CAREERS
IN A BUSINESS IN TRANSITION.



Meg Morrison leads the filming of an episode of the Pro-Am Golf Show, which she owns, produces and hosts.

FEW PEOPLE can handle pressure like Meg Morrison (Radio and Television '04).

With her ball teed up, she glances down the 282-yard fairway while former Edmonton Oiler Jason Strudwick and Buffalo Sabres first-round draft pick Mark Pysyk watch from nearby. So does a production crew, cameras rolling.

"Are you guys scared?" Morrison asks "Struds," her co-host, and Pysyk, her guest for this episode of the *Pro-Am Golf Show*. She plants her feet and tightens her grip on the driver. It's a cloudy July day in 2015 and she's wearing a light sweater; her long hair gathers over her right shoulder as she fixes her gaze on the ball.

"I'm intimidated by someone who wears a cardigan to play golf," says Strudwick.

Ignoring the jab, Morrison smiles, coolly traces an arc with her club, and connects, hard – sending her ball into a water hazard. She allows for only a moment of disappointment. "Chip and a putt," she says cheerily. "Could still make par."

The trio carries on, cameras in tow to film the rest of the twelfth and final episode of the third season. Owned, produced and hosted by Morrison, the *Pro-Am Golf Show* airs weekly on CTV in the summer on a Saturday morning slot she purchased with her

own funds. The network pays her nothing. For income, Morrison sold ads, secured sponsorships and fees from the host courses, in this case Trestle Creek Golf Resort, 45 minutes west of Edmonton. This isn't conventional television, but it's about as conventional as a new approach to a TV career gets.

Critics call this the medium's golden age for its exceptional storytelling. Cable company executives might call it the decline of an empire. Advertising revenues have fallen steadily since 2011, reported Statistics Canada last August. Profits were also down, as were cable subscriptions, with viewers turning to online streaming services such as Netflix or to free internet content. As fallout, job and spending cuts killed the Omni newscast at Rogers, Bell said goodbye to well-known anchors and reporters on CTV and TSN, and Shaw said it would consolidate news production, also trimming staff.

Where does this leave those who are still entranced by the magic of television? Like Morrison, it means having to be more versatile and entrepreneurial than ever. Where the industry sees challenges, some students and new grads are seeing – or creating – opportunities. Despite the pressure, they're finding ways to draw the eyes of the world toward themselves and what they create.



Thanks to TV, Meg Morrison has built a career that allows her to pursue her love of golf and that suits her lifestyle.

CHANNEL M: THE MEG MORRISON WAY

Golf is and isn't all business for Meg Morrison. She's played since she was little, when dad and mom took the family out for nine holes on Friday nights. It's always had a special place in her life.

Now golf is largely responsible for her livelihood. A few months after 2015's last episode of the *Pro-Am Golf Show*, Morrison is busy organizing the 2016 season, set to air its first of 12 episodes in June (with curler Marc Kennedy as co-host; Strudwick got a gig on CityTV's *Dinner TV*). She spent the winter securing sponsors and golf courses and, for her efforts as owner of Gem Productions, the fourth season has already turned a profit. In fact, unlike many production companies, Morrison has never lost money.

"I never thought I would own my own production company," says the 31-year-old. "It was never a goal of mine." (Also surprisingly, she studied the radio side of the business but refocused after a practicum with a TV production company.)

This resourcefulness falls in line with what Cheryl Dalmer (Radio and Television '79) has seen of NAIT's current media production students. "We're seeing that, with this generation, they're very entrepreneurial. That's a big switch," says the instructor with Digital Media and IT, a program that includes digital cinema. They're also seeking a kind of personal satisfaction their parents might have been comfortable sacrificing, she adds. "They're looking for a different kind of lifestyle than

my generation – they're looking for balance."

For Morrison, mom to a four-year-old girl, summers can be hectic. In addition to producing the *Pro-Am Golf Show*, she supplements her income by filling in on the sports anchor desk when regulars go on vacation (a job she loves for the adrenaline rush of live broadcasting). But by season's end, she looks forward to spending plenty of time with family in the winter – when not preparing for next season, that is. For her, though, dealing with the pressures of working to be watched are acceptable costs of doing business her way. Television, for her, is a tool she's used to shape the lifestyle she wants.

There are moments that pressure gets uncomfortable, says Morrison. Her putting skills on season 3 of the show suffered for it. "It was horrible," she says. "Because all the work landed on my shoulders with owning it, producing it and hosting it, I would

line up for a putt but I would be thinking, 'OK, if this goes in I gotta throw to a commercial. If not, I have to sink it, then go to a commercial and, oh, don't forget to say the sponsor name.'"

Not for a moment, though, does Morrison ever lose sight of the fact that, as far as life goes in the golden age of television, she's made it. "For any golfer, they're sitting at their desk on a Friday afternoon going, 'Oh my goodness, I want to be on a golf course right now.' Well, I get to do it and I get to be paid for it." ■

"I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD OWN MY OWN PRODUCTION COMPANY... IT WAS NEVER A GOAL OF MINE."

-MEG MORRISON, PRO-AM GOLF SHOW HOST, PRODUCER AND OWNER