

Aug. 24, 2007.

To whom it may concern:

I would like to offer my wholehearted endorsement of Nick Olynyk as a person and an employee.

Nick did not work in the *Leader-Post's* sports department in a formal sense — for the most part, anyway. He approached me in the summer of 2007 about spending some time with us in a work-experience capacity. We have customarily said yes to anyone who is interested in joining us, but Nick was hardly a typical work-experience student.

He was (and this might be an understatement) exceptional. Within minutes of setting foot in the newsroom, he was proofreading stories and expertly picking apart the stories of grizzled veterans. For example: I gave him a copy of my column to read, and he responded by draining a pen. All of his suggestions were sound. Instead of just settling for finding typos, Nick invested considerable time and thought into assessing the structure of the piece, and enhanced it considerably.

The following day, I gave Nick another column to read. He correctly concluded that it was not National Newspaper Award material. Politely, he inferred that a grocery list would be more entertaining to read. I wisely killed the column. It was my best decision of the week. Thank you, Nick Olynyk.

Throughout his all-too-brief and entirely uncompensated tenure with us, Nick offered sound suggestions and fit in like he had been with us for 20 years. He was not at all hesitant to critique the work of experienced writers, but did so with a demeanour and a logical thought process that impressed us all. Although Nick posed plenty of questions to us, I likely ended up picking his brain more frequently. His perspective and personality made him an asset from Day 1. I cannot say enough complimentary things about Nick.

I don't want to create the impression that Nick would start picking apart new-found colleagues from the moment he entered an employment situation. I am attempting to illustrate how impressed I was with his intelligence and perceptive nature. We have never, ever had a work-experience person who is even remotely comparable to Nick.

Here's the best example: On Aug. 18, 2007, the Saskatchewan Roughriders played host to the Edmonton Eskimos in a Canadian Football League game. I arranged for Nick to obtain media credentials so he could discover what it is like to cover a professional sporting event, and so that he could gather some material for his blog. Guess what? The lights went out in the fourth quarter. Chaos ensued. A normal game became a HUGE story. We had two full-time reporters on staff, but the unexpected circumstances dictated that we could have used four people, or more.

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With that in mind, I asked Nick if he would interview some fans outside the stadium. He instantly obliged and ended up obtaining some wonderful quotes and insights during the first interview in which he has been the questioner. Clearly, Nick was taking note when, as a hockey player, he was on the other end of the interviewing process. The result of Nick's toil was a byline in the next edition of the *Leader-Post* — which is unprecedented for a work-experience student.

I could rave about him forever. He is a natural for a position at a newspaper, despite not having had any formal instruction in journalism. His intuition and curiosity serve him well — and those are attributes which would benefit him in any line of work. My only hope is that he doesn't take my job anytime soon.

Thank you for dedicating your valuable time to my sentiments regarding Nick Olynyk. I am certain that you will reach the same conclusions within seconds of meeting him. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

Cheers,



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