

Krystal Nungaray won the 2022-2023 Emmy Award for Outstanding Studio Show - Weekly, "FOX NFL Sunday" (photo by Lilo Ro).



STORYSTRUCK

FOX Sports has given Carlsbad's Krystal Nungaray her unique voice.

Written by **WENDY HINMAN**

Krystal Nungaray is a producer. That's not just a job title; it's a gift and a calling. If you said she's a storyteller you'd be right, but there's more to it than that. She is a creator of moments in which storytelling, editing, managing a team, and overlaying music and images all have to come together so we can see underneath pageantry and hero-making. Working for FOX Sports, the world she uncovers for us is the humanity of the NFL.

Mostly, Nungaray has also curated narratives for NASCAR, IndyCar, UFL, the Belmont Stakes, FIFA World Cup and more. But football is her first sports love. And guys, she's single. The lucky man who marries this woman will not only have a multitalented companion, but the best ever private consultant for his fantasy football team.

GOOD MORNING, LANCER SPORTS FANS!

"I am not athletic," Nungaray confesses. Odd, since she was president of Fellowship of Christian Athletes during her Carlsbad High School days. "I was in the 50th graduating class at Carlsbad [2008]. The last class to graduate on the old field." Nungaray had been in the broadcast program at Aviara Oaks Middle School and then joined Doug Green's CHSTV on its way to becoming legendary.

"We didn't have the state-of-the-art studio CHSTV has now. We had a supply closet as our voiceover booth and Mr.

Green jury-rigging equipment." Green had a jar of popsicle sticks with jobs written on each. Students would pick a stick for their job for the daily broadcast. He wanted the students to be adept at all aspects of production. Nungaray said that stood her in good stead.

Her fledgling attempts in the anchor chair and editing booth got her thinking, "This is great; I can do this." She says, "I feel so blessed that I knew what I wanted to do as a teenager." Broadcasting was one aspect, but Nungaray said she was trying to find her unique voice. "I was so lucky to have a teacher like Doug." She said he gave her a sports segment. Though not athletic, she realized, "Those were my people. CHS was so competitive then." The school was the CIF football champion in '06 and '07. Nungaray uses the word "blessing" a lot. She realizes not every school could offer the constellation of opportunities she enjoyed during her high school career. "CHSTV gave me a way to be involved in sports."

She remembered Green throwing her into a press conference the last year Omni La Costa Resort & Spa hosted the Accenture Match Play Championship. Tiger Woods was in his prime. "My mom and I scoured Macy's racks for a suit to wear. ESPN, the Golf Channel, people were jumping all over each other and shouting questions. Then Tiger looked right at me." She got her question in and couldn't believe it when she watched the clip roll the next day.

SUNDAYS ARE FOR CHURCH AND FOOTBALL.

"My mom has six brothers. With one TV, by default football was always on," Nungaray says. "I had so many male cousins who played football I had to know my stuff or I'd get kicked to the corner."

After church on Sundays, Nungaray would spend the buck fifty on the San Diego Union Tribune and pore over the sports page looking for personalities, predilections and prognostications. She was ready for an afternoon of NFL games and going toe-to-toe with uncles and cousins as arm-chair experts.

From CHS, Nungaray went to Chapman University, majoring in television and broadcast journalism. That's when she first learned the paradisiacal nature of Carlsbad; fellow students would say to her, "Carlsbad?! That's where my family would vacation." While at Chapman, she snagged an internship with the NFL Network. "It got me in the building and built confidence," she says. "I'd follow people around and ask questions." This took her through the season, the

playoffs, the Super Bowl, combines and the draft.

Willing to work late nights with fast turnarounds, she made an impression. A couple of days before graduation, "someone didn't show up." They hired her to run the teleprompter. Nungaray was editing and a production assistant. "I cut my teeth on unglamorous TV." All morning shows are based on East Coast time. "I did three years of overnights. There were days I didn't see the sun."

Her get-it-done work ethic drove her promotions at the NFL Network. She was nominated for her first Emmy for a piece she produced during Covid. Everything was shut down, so she was editing from the production booth at North Coast Calvary Chapel in Carlsbad. When it's crunch time and she delivers, her mom always says, "You and God always do." She worked for the NFL Network for 11 years and left as a feature producer.

THEN THE STARS ALIGNED.

When Nungaray moved to FOX Sports, her career blossomed into her true gifts and calling. She feels the weight

of responsibility to tell someone else's story. "I want the players to feel, 'They held my story.'" Whether it's Sam Darnold's redemption or the rise of Daniel Jones, "we have to tell their truth, their character in 3.5 minutes."

She points to a piece on Lions' wide receiver Amon-Ra St. Brown. It's Thanksgiving and she's brought his parents into the interview. St. Brown loves his family and the unique way they brought him to where he is. To his parents he is a loved son, not a Lion. Nungaray held their story well and there wasn't a dry eye in the studio.

Nungaray is not starstruck so much as storystruck. The first celebrity she dealt with outside the galaxy of NFL players and coaches was Zac Efron. There he was, Troy Bolton from "High School Musical," in the flesh. "He was very nice," she says. "And treated me like a peer."

And there were others:

Don Cheadle? "Hilarious."

Jon Hamm? "Professional."

George Clooney? "I got a big hug from 'the sexiest man alive.'"

She had a where-am-I moment as Morgan Freeman voiced the NASCAR narrative she'd written. When he finished, he looked at her and said in that bronzy baritone, "How's that?" "Perfect" came to mind; as Nungaray says, "Like I'm ever going to give notes to Morgan Freeman!"

But football and Carlsbad are still her first loves. Sometimes there is a crossover. Nungaray was at a Coach of the Year award ceremony when that year's honoree, fellow Carlsbadian and Minnesota Vikings Head Coach Kevin O'Connell, walked in. He greeted her with, "There's my Carlsbad girl!" And they chatted about the tacos and places and family they miss.

Though she now lives in L.A., she comes home to Carlsbad for 36 hours each week. "It's how I reset. I still get my hair and nails done in Carlsbad. I love to wear my Padres gear in L.A." She misses the days when Poinsettia Lane was a dirt road to play on. She misses the simplicity of picking a popsicle stick to do one job instead of five. Nungaray says, "Sports has taken me to so many places in this country, but Carlsbad is still the shining gem."



a) George Clooney about to tell a Nungaray-curated story. b) Minnesota Vikings Head Coach and fellow Carlsbadian Kevin O'Connell with Nungaray at the Coach of the Year Awards. c) Doug Green and Nungaray with the top national student broadcasting award in Nungaray's CHS days. d) Alex Wohleber and Nungaray working and enjoying Super Bowl LIX. e) Nungaray, Rob Gronkowski and Curt Menefee checking details on the set of "FOX NFL Sunday" (photos courtesy of Krystal Nungaray).

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