Journalism Grad is the Voice of the Denver Broncos
Alum’s Childhood Dream Comes True
by Madeline Phipps

For most Coloradans, autumn Sundays are synonymous with one thing — Denver Broncos football. DU alumnus Conor McGahey (BA ’07, communication), who in 2016 became the public-address announcer at Broncos home games, has a unique perspective on the blue-and-orange mania that overtakes Denver each weekend.

In the booth for all of the Broncos’ home games, McGahey announces the results of each play — from yardage gained to the players involved to the famous “IN-COM-PLETE” chant that gets the crowd going. While McGahey’s announcement of each play sounds effortless, it actually involves a lot of work. He keeps track of the action with the help of a spotter. They work as a team — McGahey observes the offense, while his spotter focuses on the defense and the yardage.

“With all the factors involved, usually between the two of us we can get the action announced pretty easily,” he says. “All of these different gears are working together, and hopefully it comes out OK.”

McGahey’s path to becoming the voice of one of the NFL’s most successful franchises started early. His family had season tickets to the Denver Nuggets and the Colorado Avalanche and also attended DU hockey games, traveling from their home in Breckenridge to cheer for the Pioneers. He was 9 years old, watching a Denver Grizzlies hockey game with his dad in 1994 when, McGahey says, he was mesmerized by the voice of longtime Denver sports announcer Alan Roach, who was calling the game. “The fact that that kind of voice was live in the building fascinated me,” he says. “I remember thinking for the first time that this line of work might be a possibility.”

While the Grizzlies lasted only one season in Colorado, McGahey’s passion for sports and broadcasting continued. He started calling high school games at age 14, and his future career started taking shape when he came to DU to study journalism. “I arrived at DU, and I just started asking if they needed any sports announced,” McGahey says. His persistence paid off, and he ultimately connected with assistant athletic director Angel Field. Field arranged for McGahey to announce a range of DU games, from women’s lacrosse to hockey. “I owe her a lot,” he says. “It sounds so clichéd, but usually all you need is a chance.”

McGahey also eagerly took on any chance to announce that happened to come his way. At one basketball game during his sophomore year, the scheduled announcer failed to show. “I was
playing in the pep band at the time,” McGahey remembers, “and they literally looked around and said, ‘Can anyone fill in?’ I took off my saxophone and said, ‘I got it!’”

McGahey also credits his idol, Roach, with mentoring him and helping him in his career. They met when McGahey wrote a profile of Roach for the Clarion. Roach, who announced for the Broncos until 2015, called Pioneer hockey games while the NHL was on strike in 2004. When he had to miss DU hockey games because of his commitments with the Broncos, he recommended McGahey for the challenge.

As McGahey puts it, his success at an early age was “mostly dumb luck.” When the Avalanche played an intersquad exhibition game at DU in 2005, McGahey was invited to announce. That led to a meeting with the team’s game director, and then an announcing job. McGahey continued announcing for the Avalanche after graduating and also announced for the Denver Outlaws and the Colorado Rapids. When Roach left the Broncos to work for the Minnesota Vikings last summer, McGahey took over his role.

Despite working for one of the game’s powerhouse teams, McGahey says he doesn’t feel too much pressure. “I know what the Broncos mean to this town, but at the same time I have to look at every event the same way,” he says. “Extra pressure just creates more mistakes.”

[Photo: Conor McGahey became the public-address announcer for the Broncos in summer 2016. Photo: Wayne Armstrong]