

# Game boy

***Sports Night* is the best job Peter Krause has ever had  
- and he knows it**

**P**eter Krause is adamant. Sure, drop a turkey onto the *Sports Night* anchor desk. Just don't do it during a commercial break.

Krause (rhymes with "yowza") is an actor who is as sharp and dry as his rookie series, a comedy about the behind-the-scenes action at a fictional cable sports channel. On this day, the 33-year-old Minneapolis native is in Toronto, on a much-needed two-week break from the best job he's ever had, playing sports update anchor Casey McCall on the season's brightest new series.

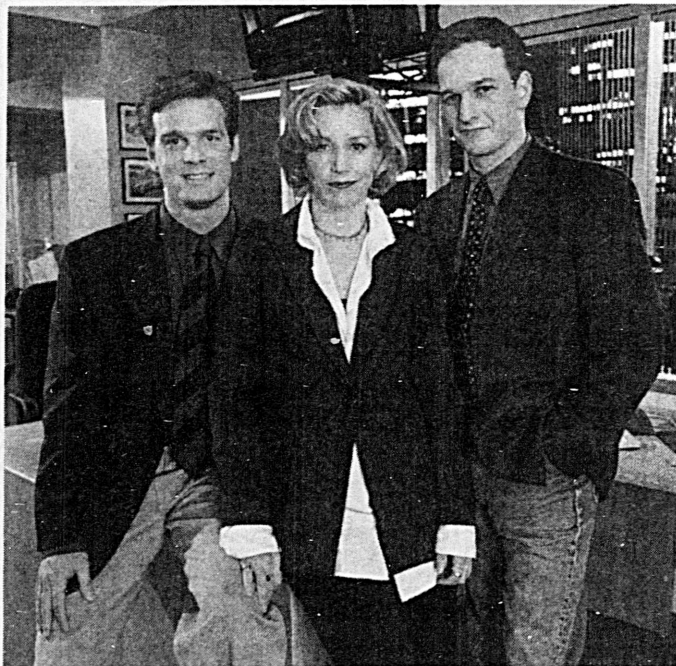
In fact, Krause is so high on *Sports Night* that he is putting in 14-hour days, often staying after work to run lines. And he is ready to argue even the slightest point to get things just right.

The show's Thanksgiving episode back in November is a prime example. It called for a turkey to drop onto the anchor desk (which Krause shares with Josh Charles, who plays co-anchor Dan Rydeil) from high above on the studio light grid, where it was thawing out for a Thanksgiving family dinner being planned by tightly wound sports producer Dana Whitaker (Felicity Huffman).

Krause argued with executive producer Aaron Sorkin (author of *A Few Good Men* and *Armageddon*) that "you only get one chance to drop a turkey on a TV series," and that it should happen while the anchors were at their desk. Sorkin dug in his heels.

"They ended up dropping the turkey during the 'commercial break' - which, in my estimation, is about half as funny as it could have been," Krause says. And are all of Krause's ideas better? "I can't remember all the times when my idea wasn't the better idea," he quips. "I try to repress those."

TV audiences may remember Krause for his role as the long-suffering son-in-law on *Cybill*, as well as for a handful of shortlived sitcoms. Although he admits he is having the time of his life on *Sports Night*, acting on TV isn't the career he had planned. "When I was at graduate school [in New York], I bad-



Krause, Huffman, Charles: issue driven

mouthed television louder than anyone," Krause recalls. "Look at me now. Five television series later, here I am."

Weeks after graduating from New York University, Krause landed a job on Carol Burnett's last TV series. He soon discovered that doing television in five days isn't as easy as one might think. "There's a reason why television doesn't look like a movie," he says. "I think that what we're coming up with in five days on *Sports Night* is pretty incredible and that's another reason why I'm so proud of it."

Krause is quick to credit Sorkin for the success of the show. "Aaron pretty much rewrites each script to give it his voice and his vision," Krause explains. "He's a brilliant storyteller."

Krause is lobbying hard to have Sorkin stay with the show as long as possible, although NBC wants Sorkin to develop *West Wing*, a timely new series about White

House aides. "If that goes to series," says Krause, "it will at least be the second best show on television."

Sorkin and Krause knew each other back when they were both bartending in New York. At the time, Sorkin offered Krause a part in a play he had written. Swamped with exams, Krause turned him down. The play turned out to be *A Few Good Men*.

The next time Krause had a chance to audition for Sorkin, the actor grabbed it.

At first glance, *Sports Night* may seem a world away from some of Sorkin's other works (he also wrote *The American President*), but Krause says that's not the case. "Aaron's very much into power and politics," Krause explains. "At first, that wasn't evident to me on *Sports Night*, but there are definitely interpersonal power and political

aspects in the show."

There are some real-life power struggles behind the scenes as well. Sorkin fought hard to drop that tired TV convention, the laugh track. In fact, when the storyline veers toward the dramatic (such as one episode which dealt with the attempted rape of a female producer) the laugh track disappears.

"I think a lot of people are expecting *Sports Night* to be more comedic than it is," says Krause. "But a lot of the episodes are very issue driven. This show has a voice."

That's not to say it's all life and death on the *Sports Night* set. Between takes, Krause and a few of his fellow cast members often cool off at the controls of a video game.

"I'm a closet nerd," admits Krause, who plays video hockey, auto racing and basketball in his dressing room. "For the guys in the show, it's very much like living in a college-dorm room. We're just staying after work, sharing a beer."

**SPORTS NIGHT**  
Tuesdays; ABC, CTN.