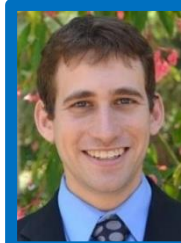
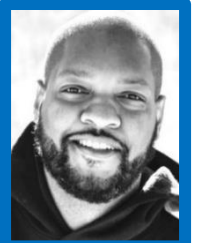


Career Wisdom from the Sports Industry Arena



National Basketball Association

Steinberg Sports & Entertainment

National Football League



Golf Channel

NCAA

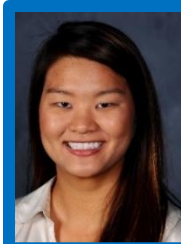
adidas



Sacramento Kings

TikTok

Turner Sports



USA Today

The Tennis Channel

NASCAR



SLAM

CAA ICON

ESPN



SoFi Stadium and Hollywood Park

Seattle Sounders FC

Golden State Warriors



Content Compiled By
Ron Roberts, Jr.
 Career & College Planning Partner



Acknowledgements

A quick but sincere note of appreciation to all of the sports industry professionals who submitted content for this project. This is one of several projects that I have recently worked on to better prepare college students and recent graduates for career opportunities in the world of sports. Your pearls of career wisdom will truly benefit the many students and early career professionals who are expected to view this booklet. You are making a real difference for the next generation of talent whether it be for sports or other industries.

Thank you much.

Ron Roberts, Jr.

Career & College Planning Partner

Creator, "The Sports Industry Showcase" Conference

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/ronrobertsjr/>

<https://sportsindustryshowcase.blogspot.com/>

Sports Career Wisdom By Topic

Flexibility & Adaptability

It is very rare that you come across successful leaders in our industry that have spent their careers in one city, or one state. The flexibility and openness to move to where the opportunity presents itself will be key. NYC and LA are two exceptions to this given the abundance of pro teams, brands, agencies, and leagues based in these two cities.

James Jordan, Senior Manager – Corporate Partnership Sales, Los Angeles Rams

Hardwork & Persistence

The harder you work, the luckier you get. Nothing in the sports industry comes from luck you have to continually work hard and go the extra mile and if you do that over a sustained period of time great things will happen. There is a compounding effect to consistency.

Aaron Seabron, Vice President, US Sports, adidas

The early years will be tough, but if you are able to push through the reward will be on the other side. As with most industries, the start to a career in sports is not easy. The responsibilities will not be glamorous, the paycheck may not be one you love, however the sports career you always envisioned isn't far away so long as you are persistent.

James Jordan, Senior Manager, Corporate Partnership Sales, Los Angeles Rams

Informational Interviews

Prepare thoroughly for your informational interviews. Research the person, industry, company, competitors etc. The worst experiences I have had with informational interviews have been in the instances when someone shows up without having prepared. Your time is valuable and so is the person you are conducting an informational interview with. Use the time wisely, have an objective you want to accomplish, and make it count.

Aaron Seabron, Vice President, US Sports, adidas

Don't be shy-ask for informational interviews, advice, suggestions, and other ideas-you'll be surprised how effective and helpful that can be.

Peter Steckelman, Senior Vice President, Business & Legal Affairs, The Tennis Channel

Internships

Internships are incredibly valuable. Once you finish college and the further you get away from education internship opportunities decrease significantly. Start early! I hear a lot of students say where do I look? Think about it as how can you build your resume to give you as much experience, so that you differentiate yourself from others that might be looking for entry level roles. Ex: I took 4 internships (marketing at a local McDonalds, Stadium Operations, Membership Services, and a marketing agency) I may not have wanted to work in any of those fields, but I knew it would diversify my skills, so I had the best opportunity to get a full-time job.

Aaron Lampkin, Vice President, Ticket Sales and Service, Seattle Sounders FC

In an internship you want someone to see you not just as an intern but as someone they can project doing a full-time role at the company. Leverage the fact that you are new eyes and ears to bring fresh perspective and do the little things well (be on time, ask good questions, deliver on your commitments etc.)

Aaron Seabron, Vice President, US Sports, adidas

I can't stress how important it is to have internship experience, or other tangible related work experience. Entry-level positions within our industry are extremely competitive, and usually those that are hired to fill these roles are overqualified. Sports is an extremely fast-paced industry. For that

reason, if you can show a hiring manager that you have related experience and are able to work without constant oversight, it will only put you in good stead. Internships are the best way to get your foot in the door within an organization. If you impress during your internship, there is always the chance that you are offered a full-time role.

James Jordan, Senior Manager, Corporate Partnership Sales, Los Angeles Rams

Interviewing

For those who are pivoting into the sports world from other fields, the interview process will be key. I came into sports from a legal background and the only reason I was able to successfully make the jump was by honing in on all of my transferable skills and selling them in the interview. Whatever you learned in banking or tech can be marketable for sports so spend some time figuring out how and perfecting how you'll pitch that in an interview.

Nadia Kim, Content & Marketing Coordinator, National Football League

Mentors

Mentors make you efficient. They have been in your shoes and have found success - lean on them to answer questions that you may not be able to ask your direct boss or to provide insight into an aspect of the industry. Treat your mentors like professors, they are there for your development!

Aaron Lampkin, Vice President, Ticket Sales and Service, Seattle Sounders FC

Mentorship is a two-way street. Find ways to add value back to your prospective mentor beyond them just helping you. If you are adding value to the mentor they will be more invested in adding value back to you.

Aaron Seabron, Vice President, US Sports, adidas

Working with a mentor is the main reason why I have my job at the NFL. I was lucky enough to be partnered in a mentorship program with my current boss through an organization for women in sports and she happened to have an open role on her team. She saw a great fit in me for the position and here I am 3.5 years later! Join as many organizations as you can and seek out mentorship opportunities when they present themselves.

Nadia Kim, Content & Marketing Coordinator, National Football League

Networking and Relationship Building

"It's not your net worth, it's your network" I know cliché, but what is interesting is that your network may open the door for you to have a net worth. Meet people, ask about their journey, follow-up, and stay in touch. You never know when you may be talking to your future employer! Be intentional about whose time you are asking for and make it worth it.

Aaron Lampkin, Vice President, Ticket Sales and Service, Seattle Sounders FC

Every moment in a relationship is an opportunity to make an impact or an impression. Manage all of your touchpoints well in terms of follow-up and follow through. If you want to be interesting be interested in what others are doing. Be thoughtful, be curious and when someone gives you their contact info actually follow-up.

Aaron Seabron, Vice President, US Sports, adidas

Networking and relationship building is everything in sports. This is a who you know industry, and you will quickly realize how small this industry is. Never underestimate the power and importance of networking. Every major opportunity I have had in my career has come through relationships I have built, not through a job posted online. In fact, of the seven roles I have had, only two were ever posted online.

James Jordan, Senior Manager, Corporate Partnership Sales, Los Angeles Rams

People like to hire people they know. Who knows you? If no one knows you, then you better start building relationships! Use the Proximity Principle and start spending time with people at the company you want to work for, or with people doing the work you want to do. Buy coffee, do video calls, ask great questions but more importantly be a great person and the type of person other people want to work with. Be humble, curious, and be a servant leader and you will achieve the career you want.

Paul Dobesh, *Senior Director, Operations, NBA Digital, Turner Sports*

Make sure you network with likeminded individuals and find your way into industry events.

Peter Steckelman, *Senior Vice President, Business & Legal Affairs, The Tennis Channel*

Sports Career Wisdom In General

Taking the time prior to graduating to have real-time practice in the industry, building your network, and utilizing strong mentors will take sports from being hard to being the fun, exciting world we all know sports to be. Lastly, take a deep breath, know it will all work out... As long as you keep working hard, STAY FOCUSED!

Aaron Lampkin, Vice President, Ticket Sales and Service, Seattle Sounders FC

“Be where your feet are.” staying present, being mindful, and being aware will allow you to drown out all the external factors. The sports industry is extremely rewarding, and FUN. But don't ever lose sight of the fact it's an “industry”, a very demanding and lucrative one. If you have an appetite for healthy competition, the sports industry is for you.

Adrian Smith, Senior Associate. CAA ICON

My advice (for students) would be to learn as much as they can from the Athletics department in their school. This way they will be exposed to various environments. Take advantage of internships with any team it does not matter if you are not a fan or follow the sport. Start learning about those sports to be able to have some knowledge when interviewing.

If you don't get an internship, there is still hope. It's just long road is getting one of the seasonal positions and networking. But don't take just any position, get one that will give you a chance to meet a variety of people from the front office. It takes a lot longer and you really have to excel to have people notice. Connect with as many people as possible and ask for feedback on resumes from them. Be ready to move out of state, work in small markets to get experience.

Alex Maravilla, Guest Experience Event Day Manager, SoFi Stadium and Hollywood Park

My advice to any college student wanting a career in sports is to get involved in areas they are passionate about as quickly as possible and earn some real-world experience. The Sports Industry is SO diverse now (it's basically like any other business with traditional "corporate" departments, so decide what you are most passionate about like Public Relations, IT or Video Production and focus on that area. Most schools have very robust educational paths for getting degrees in this area, but more importantly, many have sports programs that act like these businesses. Get involved! Work for free if you need to...put in the extra hours and get that experience. Everyone I know who is successful in my industry started pulling cable, running camera, holding a boom mic for interviews, etc...and usually for college credit, or for free. Decide the areas you want to focus on and GET INVOLVED!

Andrew Kehrer, Former Senior Director of Motion Design & Brand, Golf Channel

Being personable and honest will help you organically build relationships. Therefore people will bring your name up in conversations when a company, team or agency is hiring. Another key component is outreach! Reach out to someone who has a desired position and ask for informational interviews, not everyone will respond but someone will, and that someone can guide you, mentor you and lead you to any potential opportunities.

Ishmael Lawrence, Director of Marketing, Steinberg Sports & Entertainment

Everyone wants to work for the NFL team or the NBA team in their city. The reality is that there are very few jobs, and a huge pool of overqualified candidates for every open position. I highly recommend looking at agencies as a path to break into the industry. Often on the agency side you will be exposed to a variety of sports, personnel, brands, talent, etc. that you would not be if you worked for a specific league or team. Agencies are a brilliant place to start a career in sports, especially for those not yet laser focused on a specific role or organization.

James Jordan, Senior Manager – Corporate Partnership Sales, Los Angeles Rams

My best advice for a college student seeking a career in sports is to be open to opportunities. What I mean by that is “working in sports” doesn’t need to solely mean working for a league, professional team, etc. One of my favorite roles was supporting Visa and managing communications around their brand sponsorships for the NFL, FIFA World Cup and the Olympics. I bring this up because you don’t necessarily think of Visa as a sports company. However, they are very much involved with sports through their sports sponsorship efforts, and that provided me an opportunity to “work in sports.” This is just one example.

Joel Monson, Senior Manager, Global PR & Corporate Communications at adidas

Follow your curiosity. As a college student, you have the flexibility to intern with different companies across a variety of specialties in the sports business. In all of these roles, follow your curiosity and pursue projects that pique your interest. Chances are your curiosity will lead you down a rabbit hole of discovery and help you uncover the area of sports you're most passionate about. Along this journey, empower yourself to create projects outside of your assigned duties that challenge your thinking and find opportunities to add value to the team you're working with.

Kat Marquez, Sports Partnerships, TikTok

Be proactive and have your head on a swivel, meaning keep an eye out for sports biz webinars/panels/conferences/podcasts/newsletters/etc. that you can attend/read/listen to. Anything you learn in these forums could help you: discover an emerging trend, find your next opportunity, or learn something about someone/a company you want to network with or work for.

Don't be afraid to ask questions, bring solutions forward when you see gaps in business processes, get used to living in the "gray", and have a growth mindset.

Kim Hoey, Manager, Partnership Insights, Golden State Warriors

Be relentless. Do not accept no for an answer. If you do not get one internship, keep trying. Sometimes you must take a few steps back in order to go forward. Also, if you’re in a position you’re not fond of and asking yourself, “what am I doing?”, just know that it’s ok to ask that. Others before you and after you will ask the same question when they’re in similar situations. My caveat would be to keep the bigger picture in mind, such as “I’m here to get the experience I need, so I can get the position I really want.”

Get as much experience as you can in different fields, you may surprise yourself to see that you like sports marketing better than football operations, for example. Or perhaps you prefer a collegiate environment instead of professional sports. Intern in both, if you’re able to. I knew for certain at the beginning of the program (University of San Francisco Sport Management Program) I wanted to coach and work in basketball operations. After UC Irvine, I knew it was not a fit for me. Additionally, cast your net wide, be willing to move for a couple years. Yes, you may get an opportunity in a city or region you have no interest in residing in long-term, but get the experience and try to parlay it into a job in a market where you’ll be happier. Lastly, work as hard as you can to ensure you are providing value in your current role. It may not be what you want to do, but managers are not looking to promote mediocre employees. If you’re not working hard now, what’s the guarantee that you’ll work hard when you move up?

Leshon Hughes, Associate Manager, Direct-to-Consumer Strategy & Retention, National Basketball Association

The best advice I can provide is to never stop getting reps. Get in the habit of constantly creating content and then seeking feedback both professionally and from your peers. Also try not to let those critiques affect you personally but look at it as an opportunity to perfect your skill set.

Marcus Matthews, Senior Manager - Social Media Content, The Undeclared, ESPN

“Talent is a pursued interest. Anything that you are willing to practice, you can do.” Bob Ross

Starting out on the operational side of the NASCAR industry, the transition into sales was something I knew I needed to fully dive into if I was to develop that skill set. I love the quote above as it relates to putting in the work every day, no matter what role you are in.

Learn from those who have been there before you, ask questions, be willing to fail first, and get out of your comfort zone. Be coachable, consistent, and dependable every day. Those that can put in the work to become a solid “go-to” individual when leadership needs someone to lean on will go a long way. Be relentless and unapologetic about your work, your drive, and where you want to be.

At the end of the day, be someone that you would want to work with!

Mark Bailey, Director, Business Development - West Region, NASCAR

Get whatever hands-on experience you can get with writing/video, regardless of the profile. The more you have in the tool box, the better off you’ll build your skillset. Pursue as many internships as possible so you are in a professional setting. And network organically – don’t just schmooze with people or reach out when you need a job. Talk to people to know them organically so they will want to help you down the line.

Mark Medina, NBA Reporter, USA Today

BE YOURSELF!!! I have always been transparent with my management from day one. I was clear that I work to provide for my family. I explained I work hard and when I do, I will give them my all. For me, I wanted to be part of something I loved so much. My passion and hard work have placed me where I am today. On game days, I am walking on the court with players, and have to pinch myself because this is now my JOB! I love my members and my coworkers. Who could ask for more? You can push yourself to be in the same place one day! HAVE FUN! If you don’t succeed the first time, try again. You will get it right!

Marnie Marfil, Premium Accounts Manager, Premium Services Sacramento Kings

Do what you are passionate about and throw yourself into it. Use college to dabble in all sorts of areas of the sports world to find where that passion lies and then get as much experience as you can (and make as many connections as you can) in that area. And remember, we’re working in sports so make sure you’re having fun.

Michael Schwartz, Senior Sports Content Researcher, ESPN

Whatever area of the sports world you want to join, learn as much as you can about that area and aim to work in that space, as an intern, extern, regular employee, etc.

And choose courses that support your goals-take classes in finance/accounting, labor relations, intellectual property, and management to help refine your interests and passions-whether you want to work for a team, an agency, a league, etc.

Peter Steckelman, Senior Vice President, Business & Legal Affairs, The Tennis Channel

Grow where you are planted but be unreasonable and audacious in your growth no matter what anyone around you thinks or says.

Samir Hernandez, Vice President of Special Projects, SLAM

In terms of lessons/advice, I’d recommend starting early. When in high-school or early stages at college, talk to professors and find opportunities to get involved, volunteer or just help out with athletics departments and related events. This early experience is vital in developing knowledge on the industry, as well as in creating a network that will keep you in the know when a sports jobs opportunity will eventually arise. If you choose to pursue sports administration/management degree, consider that your

college or university is likely a pipeline of candidates to sports organizations in the area. Sports organizations often work with colleges to find pools of candidates for volunteering, internships or entry-level jobs opportunities. That's why such a degree is a good step toward a career in the field, but also means you will have to be proactive and intentional from the get-go, to try to distinguish yourself from your peers. Professors and career counselors will present all students with opportunities to engage, so you definitely want to raise your hand and say 'yes', even when it is out of your comfort zone. That is how you'll grow and get the necessary experience. If you have done just that throughout your college career, you'll find out (usually in hindsight) that you have positioned yourself to network, be in the know, and have professionals in your corner who can attest or recommend you.

Shay Wallach, *Assistant Director of Inclusion, NCAA*

About Ron Roberts, Jr.

Ron Roberts, Jr. is a self-titled “Career & College Planning Partner”. He actively partners with youth and those organizations that invest in their career and college preparedness. Ron draws on his many years as a college career advisor and corporate recruiter. He has supported students with career and college readiness through one-on-one advising and presentations to youth-serving organizations, churches, and college student groups. Ron has also created and coordinated multiple career events to better acquaint students with a variety of career paths. Most recently, Ron created and co-hosted “The Sports Industry Showcase”, a virtual conference to inform and inspire students aspiring to careers in sports.

In addition to the above, Ron has created a monthly career newsletter for teens (“Career Intelligence For Teens”) and a career and college readiness hub (“Career Intelligence For Young Leaders”) for high school and college students. He is passionate about guiding high school and college students to satisfying college experiences and satisfying careers. Ron lives in the Los Angeles area with his very supportive wife, Kelly.