

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

— IN —

SPORT MANAGEMENT

Internships and Beyond



Susan Brown Foster and John E. Dollar

Experiential Learning in Sport Management

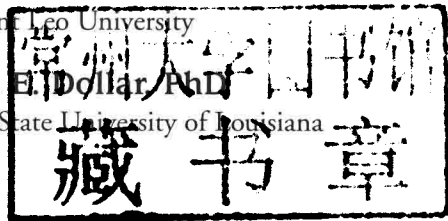
Internships and Beyond

Susan Brown Foster, PhD

Saint Leo University

John E. Dollar, PhD

Northwestern State University of Louisiana



FiT

Fitness Information Technology

A Division of the International Center
for Performance Excellence

West Virginia University

262 Coliseum, WHEELING CAMPUS

PO Box

Morgantown, WV

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Fitness Information Technology

A Division of the International Center for Performance Excellence

West Virginia University

262 Coliseum, WVU-CPASS

PO Box 6116

Morgantown, WV 26506-6116

800.477.4348 (toll free)

304.293.6888 (phone)

304.293.6658 (fax)

Email: fitcustomerservice@mail.wvu.edu

Website: www.fitinfotech.com

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Sport Management Field Experiences

Dedications

To my husband, Joe, who supported the idea of a full year sabbatical to undertake this project and who was extraordinarily understanding of the time dedicated throughout the year it took to complete the book.

—SF

To my wife, Janet, for her love, understanding, and support of the time and efforts required to complete this project, and to my loving Grandmother for her guidance and encouragement many years ago to provide education to the needy.

—JD

Foreword

We are all in search of happiness in our lives and, for most Americans, happiness stems from a fascination or some affiliation with sports. We choose to completely surround ourselves with an aura of sport shows, themes, décor, sport apparel and billboards, game summaries, and scores. According to many, our number one sporting event of the year is the Super Bowl, and we only want to see the very best teams in the contest, playing the very best game of the year, with at least one overtime, before the final buzzer. And we always hope that it will be the greatest extravaganza and sport spectacle ever, even more so than last year! Because sport garners so much attention and is so much a part of anyone's life in the United States—from supporting your local pro or college team or engaging in online fantasy sports leagues, to actually participating in interscholastic or summer recreational activities—it is not uncommon for many of us to think a job in sports will provide us with lifelong happiness. “I want to *play!*”

According to a 2007–2008 high school athletics participation survey conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations, nearly 7.5 million boys and girls participated on an interscholastic sports team. According to the NCAA, a membership-led nonprofit association of colleges and universities committed to supporting academic and athletic opportunities, there are over 380,000 student-athletes participating in intercollegiate sports activities each year. Yet for the nearly 8 million participants, there are not enough job opportunities within the four major leagues (NFL, MLB, NBA, and NHL), nor when combining the large number of minor league teams and facilities, to provide all of those participants a business career in sports. “I *still* want to *play!*”

You know the NCAA commercial, “There are over 380 thousand student-athletes in the NCAA and just about all of them will be going pro in something *other* than sports.” Well, they may be referring to suiting up and *playing* professional sports, but many of these participants will wear the other kind of suit and their courts/fields will be in the business offices of sport. “May I *play* here?”

Years ago, it used to be that you could only get a job in sports if you were related to a team's owner or knew the owner or his relatives. Though networking is still a necessary procedure for anyone to be "recruited" or "discovered," our company, TeamWork Online, has encouraged most all of the major sports organizations to open their positions to the public. We have provided an online recruiting network to make those positions public to you. "Maybe I can *play!*?"

Much like one's opportunities to *play* professional sports, both the numbers of jobs are few and the competition for those jobs is fierce. In 2009, nearly 600 sport organizations including a majority of the major league sport organizations such as the New York Yankees, Boston Red Sox, Pittsburgh Penguins, Detroit Red Wings, Cleveland Cavaliers, Los Angeles Lakers, Houston Texans, and Chicago Bears, as well as tracks owned by International Speedway Corporation, tournaments on the ATP and WTA Tours and the LPGA, posted only about 7,500 job opportunities. Fortunately for some, over two-thirds were for entry level, part-time, or internship positions. However, in response to a recent posting for a Public Relations Assistant position with an NFL Team, over 1,000 people applied in eight days, so overwhelming the network that the team had to shut down the posting early. "OK, so I CAN *play!*"

Rest assured, there will be over 50,000 volunteer opportunities for the London Olympic Games. There are typically hundreds of volunteer positions available to raise money for a charitable organization by selling food and beverages at many outdoor venues. There are hundreds of volunteers needed at each professional golf tournament. "I want to *volunteer!*"

The purpose of a volunteer position or an internship in sport business is for you to test the water: to figure out whether or not the sport business industry will make you happy and demonstrate your skills as a "player" to a potential employer. How do I compare to the other players? Professional athletes try out for teams at "training camp." Business people get a chance to try out for teams as well; we call that an "internship." Maybe we should call it "training camp, too!" "I want to *make* the team!"

When most people do get a chance to "attend training camp," they make the mistake of going through the motions of a task for an internship, and then seem surprised when nothing comes from the internship. This is similar to attending season long swim practices with a varsity team, swimming in one meet and not scoring any points, and subsequently being surprised

to not receive a college swim scholarship, let alone a varsity letter. Make your experience count. “I want to SCORE!!”

Will a career in the business of sport make you happy? Are you prepared to demonstrate your best efforts to the industry? I encourage you to read, *Experiential Learning in Sport Management: Internships and Beyond* and prepare to not only serve in the industry, but, most importantly, to be prepared to learn how to suit up and make the team through the exciting and rewarding experiential learning opportunities outlined in this book, including full-time internships. *Experiential Learning in Sport Management: Internships and Beyond* may be even better than an early signing bonus! Then you can say, “Whew, I MADE the team!”

—Buffy G. Filippell

President

Teamworkonline.com and Teamwork Consulting, Inc.

22550 McCauley Road

Shaker Heights, Ohio 44122

216.360.1790

Fax: 216.292.9265

Email: buffy@teamworkonline.com

www.teamworkonline.com

Preface

Experiential learning is a seriously important factor in the educational landscape in American education. Collectively, we have more than 40 years of experience in supervising students in field experiences. We have seen what might be characterized as the good, the bad, and the ugly. Trial and error has taught us that the more organized the entire experience is from the managerial side, the better the resulting internship experience is for the student.

We first discussed co-authoring some type of internship book in the late 1990s. Our thoughts and perceptions about internships, in general, were extremely parallel. We ran into each other at a sport law conference in 2009 and, immediately, the discussion turned toward resurrecting the idea; the contract for the book was signed one month later.

Many textbooks of this type include chapters in which the student may not have much interest. Sample internship affiliation agreements, information about developing the working relationship between the educational institution and the internship site, and institutional oversight bear very little interest for the student. This book is different! Because both of us believe in working very closely with the student in the internship and other experiential learning processes, we wanted to write the book . . . to the student . . . for the student. Faculty information appears in an online supplement.

We hope this book will become a great reference for you and one that will be kept throughout your educational career and beyond. It is intended to be a program-required text. In other words, it can be purchased in your freshman introductory sport management class and be just as valuable when preparing students for a practicum, senior internship, or graduate level experience. As a student, we hope you will be exposed to it as soon as you arrive on campus or as soon as you know you wish to pursue a career in the sport business industry. Whether that will be in high school, during your undergraduate education, or while pursuing a graduate degree, we believe it will provide information and tips for an extended period of time as you search for your dream career position.

We are passionate about quality experiential learning. The book provides information from industry professionals employed in a variety of positions within the sport industry with perspectives on their own career paths, their insights, and their comments on particular topics. We have tried not to date the book. In other words, it has been written in a manner by which the information will remain relevant for years to come.

The Foster Five-Step Experiential Learning Model in Chapter 1 was not developed just for this textbook. It was conceived after years of experimentation with experiential learning concepts regarding what worked the best in helping students explore various career paths. We both believe the more opportunities an individual has to learn about an industry segment, the earlier they will discover a comfortable career choice—one for which they can become passionate in its pursuit.

We realize that many professors approach experiential learning differently. However, three common threads were discovered after collecting internship syllabi from numerous sport management colleagues, pouring over entire sport management curricula, and discussing the internship process. First, and foremost, is an early introduction—the earlier, the better—to the sport industry through volunteering, activities sponsored by a sport management major's club, class assignments, or an early formal experiential learning encounter. Most sport management programs provide one or more of these experiential learning activities. A second thread was the appearance of a culminating internship where a student worked full-time for an extended period of time without interruption. The third commonality discovered was the existence of a full semester pre-internship class. All of these seemed to be the most direct path for full and complete preparation of a student intern, especially at the undergraduate level. But experiential learning is important at any level, so the concepts of the book are applicable from high school (see Chapter 10) through graduate school.

We have also purposively reached out to the students who are contemplating graduate school including those attempting to make a decision about the pursuit of a doctoral degree. Thus, we have included the sport management professor as an intentional career path in Chapter 10 and provide several interviews of sport management professors and educators.

Enjoy!

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of several individuals who supported our passion for this project and kept us sane and laughing. To all of the individuals who graciously gave of their time in the development of the chapter practitioner comments, Time Out Interviews, and the end-of-chapter experiential learning examples—without your assistance, this book would not have been possible.

To the following Northwestern State University of Louisiana Graduate Assistants: Steven Tjaden, N. Garrison Burton, and Nathan Dunams, for assistance with references, e-mail correspondence, and Internet research.

To the following from Saint Leo University: Deirdre Selwyn, whose consistent quality and prompt assistance in Interlibrary Loan truly made research for this book much faster and easier; to Molly-Dodd Adams, Communications Manager in the Office of Public Relations, who went above the call of duty in the selection of some photographs for the book; to Michael Gradisher, Legal Counsel, who provided recommendations and forms; and to the more than 2,000 apprentices, practicum students, and interns we have had the pleasure of supervising, past and present, whose dedication to performing quality work played a role in building the sport management programs at the institutions at which we have taught. Your work and belief that quality placement is as much about hard work and personal sacrifices as it is about willingness to accept a mentor's guidance was a significant building block in the writing of this textbook.

To the administrators and colleagues who believed in our background knowledge of the sport business industry and our confidence in building quality programs, and who understood the experiential learning program was a key factor to becoming a top sport management program—your support when we made positive curriculum and program changes will never be forgotten.

And finally, to the many internship site supervisors and organizations that have provided experiential and career opportunities for our students, thank you.

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Introduction to Experiential Learning

“Your students are go-getters that understand the overall picture. They are clearly more prepared than their peers . . . your students understand personal sacrifice, can be trusted with more than ordinary tasks, and they truly represent our organization and yours in a first class manner.”

—Buck Rogers

General Manager, Huntsville Stars (AA—Milwaukee Brewers)

THE WARM UP

Sport as an industry dominates the economy. Leagues, teams, and sporting events on both the professional and amateur stages will always be a primary staple of North American society. Internationally, sport is growing as evidenced in one sector when new countries participate at each Olympic Games. Many countries are realizing the importance of grassroots sport programs to improve the quality of life and foster a strong interest and desire in youth to become athletes who will then represent their countries well in international competitions. Many foreign students desire an education in the United States, but prefer to intern or work in another country, perhaps their home country. Whatever the venue, there will always be a need for qualified sport managers and sport organizations willing to design quality internship positions that will allow the hard-working individual to gain experience through a variety of experiential learning opportunities.

Due to the glamour of the sport business industry, many may believe it is difficult, if not impossible, to get their foot in the door. Dismal pictures have been painted in key newspaper articles. In a *Wall Street Journal* article, Helyar (2006) questioned if sport management programs were “the tickets to great sport jobs” (p. R5). Belson (2009) similarly stated in a *New York Times* article that individuals would stay in “low-paying, unglamorous jobs like selling ads, tickets, and concessions” (para. 1). While these types of jobs are typical for an entry level individual starting a career in professional sport, careers in the sport industry extend far beyond this one segment of the industry. Yes, as with other industries, the recession hit the sport business industry hard in 2008 and jobs were lost. Even storied sport management programs with a strong track record for graduate job placement experienced problems (King, 2009). But as the economy rebuilds, so, too, will an industry and sport that has traditionally been known to do better than others in difficult times.

What this dismal publicity does not explain to the aspiring sport career professional is that there will always be excellent opportunities, for those who are motivated and patient, to work their way up a career ladder just as in any other industry. Very few start in the sport business industry, or any industry, in a top position which is the level to which many sport management majors aspire. Sport seems glamorous to many, but beyond the glitter and glitz, very good careers exist with good salaries. And, as one works in sport, the glitter and glitz one perceives decreases. However, sport managers typically love their careers and experience a variety of daily scenarios far different than the everyday doldrums of many jobs. Even the seasoned veteran rallies with excitement when their team, event, or business “hits a home run!” Thus, the negative publicity sport management programs receive fuels the already passionate desire of the authors to drive sport management students across geographical regions toward a clear understanding that a career in sport business is more than possible. Indeed, careers in this field are extremely desirable, fun, exciting, rewarding, and many are very financially rewarding. Six figure salaries exist in numerous segments of the industry.

Is the path to obtaining a full-time career easy? Absolutely not! But neither were the on-field practices or days in the weight room that some athletes endured in their little league, high school, or collegiate playing days. We are sure you have heard the saying, “Practice makes perfect, but only when it is perfect practice!”

Another perspective the newspaper articles do not print are the successes even in the smallest of programs. Any professor at any academic level and practicing sport management professionals throughout the sport business industry understand the key ingredient for gaining entry is gaining experience—early and often. Getting involved in the sport management associations and taking on leadership roles are great starting points. Attending conferences and participating in student competitions such as the ones hosted by the Sport Marketing Association (SMA), the Sport and Recreation Law Association (SRLA), and the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM) can be important. Students who often win these competitions have absolutely no problem getting noticed and landing full-time positions. In several chapters of this book, we present Time Out Interviews of industry professionals. Please take note of their college degrees and the institutions from which they received their degrees. This is proof positive that student success is not relegated to graduates of a few programs or only those with master's degrees. Many of these programs get a lot of the press for educating sport business leaders of tomorrow simply because of their size or name recognition. If you are attending a school with a quality curriculum and quality faculty and get experience early, then you too can hold a position in sport business and climb those industry ladders.

This book has many purposes. First and foremost, it is to tell a story. It is written to the student and for the student as a handbook for understanding how getting an early start to gaining experience can assist you, the student, in gaining full-time employment by graduation day! It will help you develop a pre-career timeline and provide valuable tips for getting your foot into the industry as well as avoiding pitfalls which will sabotage your chance of realizing your dream.

UNDERSTANDING THE SPORT BUSINESS INDUSTRY

The sport business industry is large and complex. In 1995, from a financial perspective, it was reported to be a \$152 billion industry (Lambrecht & Kraft, 2009) in the United States and in 2008, the *Sports Business Journal* reported it to be “more than \$225 billion—far more than twice the size of the U.S. auto industry and seven times the size of the movie industry” (p. 29). PricewaterhouseCoopers reported the British sports industry grew by 23% between 2006 and 2007 and the global sports market (non-U.S.) was expected to increase to more than \$140 billion by 2012 (Strong Growth, 2008).