

# *Our State...Our Department*

## **Sport Administration and Sport Studies Newsletter**



# Mississippi State University

*Department of Kinesiology*

Fall 2014

## A message from the program

Greetings to alumni, students, faculty, and other friends of our program. As the 2014-15 academic year has kicked off, we are pleased to be able to share many notable achievements with you. In this edition of the newsletter, you will find updates about the career achievements of a number of our alumni. You will also find information about some current students gaining experience by working on the set with the production of ESPN's College Gameday program when it made its way to Starkville for the first time. This type of practical experience is crucial in helping students position themselves to enter the highly-competitive sports industry, and this experience is just one of the many opportunities students have to get involved on campus. You will also find a number of other announcements about points of pride from the program. This newsletter serves an important role in helping us connect with our alumni. If you have any updates or information to share, or if there is anything we can be of help with, please feel free to contact any of our faculty members. Go Bulldogs!

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# ESPN's College Gameday:

## Mississippi State students worked with the setup and production of the show

The Mississippi State Bulldogs and the Auburn Tigers have competed on the football field 88 times and have met every year since 1955. It was the most recent contest on Saturday, October 11 that had the most electrifying atmosphere and the highest stakes. This particular matchup was the first time that Mississippi State was able to host ESPN's iconic, college football Saturday preview show, College Gameday. ESPN chooses a different site every Saturday that has the biggest marquee matchup of college football for the week. This particular Saturday, they chose Starkville, MS.

"The Gameday atmosphere was amazing from start to finish. I think most people were just as excited about College Gameday being in town as they were about the football game. The experience of seeing the students rushing towards me to get a good spot was unforgettable. The overall energy of the crowd when Gameday had the countdown Coke zero fan section was incredible!" says Jay Lee, a sport studies major here at MSU who was able to work on the set for the weekend.

The show was a success and several Mississippi State Sport Studies and Sport

Administration students were fortunate enough to work first hand with the ESPN crew in the setup and production of College Gameday.

Robyn Coleman, a senior sport communications major, shares her experience working with Gameday: "My time at College Gameday was an absolutely amazing experience. I got a chance to meet the ESPN anchors as well as everyone that works behind the scenes. I was able to get a better understanding of the job by talking to the

people who work for Gameday  
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Mississippi State students with the College Gameday personalities.

# Gameday: Continued from Page 2

and what it is like for them on a daily basis. I was able to see first-hand how fast paced everything is and how it takes a team effort to get the job done. My role was mainly setting up College Gameday and assisting the anchors in anything they needed. I also helped with painting signs for the crowd behind the anchors, so it looked like we had a ton of huge signs representing our school on television. My most memorable experience of the weekend was going on the Gameday bus. I was able to see what it looked like and how they market the bus. I also found it very interesting seeing the media bus' technology that brings the whole show together. I'm truly blessed I had the opportunity to work College Gameday and it was amazing meeting different people who make it all come together. I was told a quote that really stuck with me and I feel like it matches my journey, 'Your career is what you're paid for but your calling is what you're made for.'"

While the thrill of working with one of college football's iconic shows and seeing the electric atmosphere it helped provide Starkville is rewarding in itself, the experience helped several students establish professional connections in the industry, as well as provide them insight about what they want to do with their careers in the future.



Senior Robyn Coleman with "The Quarterback Guru" George Whitfield



This is perhaps the loudest College Gameday we have ever had. The atmosphere is incredible.

-Chris Fowler,  
ESPN broadcaster for College  
Gameday

every Saturday growing up. After having such a great time working with them it is definitely something I will consider doing as a career once I graduate."

Will Rudolph, a sport administration student at MSU, says that one of the things he learned working for ESPN was that they use an outside company called Octagon to manage their different sponsorships. "I worked closely with those employees over the weekend, and I was able to establish connections in the industry and also learn about internship opportunities available through Octagon. During my down time, I found myself constantly asking the staff questions regarding activation and the other clients that Octagon works with."

John Crawford, another MSU sport studies student, also talks about his positive experience working with ESPN and College Gameday and how it has helped him consider potential career paths in the industry: "My experience was incredible. I enjoyed every minute working with ESPN College Gameday on Friday and Saturday. It was a surreal feeling getting to go behind the scenes of a program that I would watch



Sport Studies students Arash Taheri-Araghi (left) and Jay Lee (right) on the set

# Interning in Professional Sports

## Tyler Fondren and Daniel Watkins gain experience working in the NFL

For many of the students in our program, gaining experience and finding an internship within the sports industry presents one of the biggest challenges. Most, if not all of the experts in the field will tell you that getting on the job work experience is invaluable when looking to start a career within the sports industry. A career within professional sports is especially desirable as many students grew up admiring pro teams. A few of our undergraduate and master's degree program students were fortunate to be able to work with a few different NFL franchises over the past two summers.

Tyler Fondren, who is a senior sport studies major, worked as an equipment intern with the New Orleans Saints two summers ago. He was also able to work specifically with the defensive backs at practice by assisting with drills and making sure the transition of stations went smoothly. He gives more details about his experience here: "Outside of practice I was responsible for laundry getting put out properly, inventory of different apparel, and equipping players with anything they need. One of the biggest things I learned with the Saints was how strenuous time is when you are working in a professional environment and the work ethic it takes going along with it."



Tyler Fondren (right) giving a ride to Josh Chapman (front seat) and the rest of the Indianapolis Colts defensive lineman to their position meeting.

This past summer, Tyler was also able to work with the Indianapolis Colts in the preseason at their training camp facility at Anderson University in Anderson, Indiana as an operations intern. "For about a week in June we spent the whole week planning out how training camp was going to be run come August. We had to make sure all of the dorm rooms that the players stayed in, meeting rooms, and offices were supplied and that the rooms had signs that made navigation for the coaches and players easier. Once we got to training camp we spent

about a week and half setting up everything. We would go off what we did in years past as well as see what could be done different so that it could be improved. Once camp started one of my responsibilities was to transport players around on golf carts to and from practice, meetings, meals, and wherever else they needed to be on time. One of the unique things I did was I was able to travel with a few of the players back to Indianapolis to get MRIs and other medical treatment. One of the biggest things I learned working

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# Interning in Pro Sports

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with the Colts was how to conduct myself in the front office of the NFL and the attitude and work ethic that's expected and takes to be successful. My experience gave me great insight in to what I want to do in the future and it is something I will never forget."

Daniel Watkins, who is a graduate student in the Sport Administration program, was also fortunate enough to work within the NFL. This past summer he worked for the Kansas City Chiefs as a community relations intern. He gives more detail about his experience here: "My internship with the Kansas City Chiefs organization was a once in a lifetime opportunity. It enabled me to connect with some of the most influential people in the NFL. Not only did I get experience from a department that I never knew existed in sport (community relations), but I was given the opportunity to work with many departments from, marketing, productions, inside sales, corporate sponsorships, suites & services, and event sales. This internship provided me with the tools and experience to move forward in the sport industry. Since the internship, I have had multiple job interviews and I truly credit my time with the Chiefs as reason for many of those opportunities. I can't emphasize enough how crucial it was for me to get the opportunity to connect with so many high profile employees. The internship has truly helped jumpstart my career, and I will forever be grateful for my time with such a prestigious organization."

Daniel and Tyler would both say that the experience they gained working in professional sport is invaluable as they look to begin their careers in the sport industry. These are just a few of our Mississippi State Sport Studies students who have ventured out throughout the country with hopes of establishing professional contacts as well as gain knowledge of different areas within the industry.



Daniel Watkins (Left) on the sideline in Arrowhead Stadium as the Chiefs take on the Seattle Seahawks.

## Updates

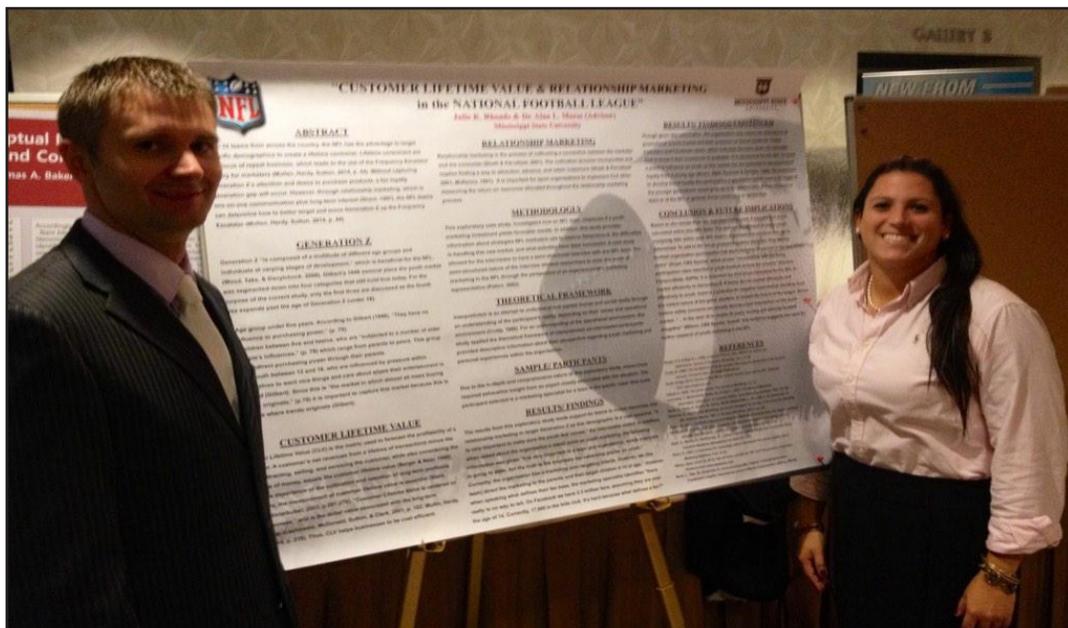


While in Philadelphia, PA to attend the Sports Marketing Association Conference, Dr. Alan Morse (left) was able to catch up with K.C. Mayer (right) who is a former Sport Administration master's degree program alum and current Ph.D. student at Northern Colorado, at Citizens Bank Park.

# Sports Marketing Association Conference

The Sports Marketing Association, which was founded in 2002, has led the effort in developing and expanding the body of knowledge in sport marketing by providing forums for professional interaction among practitioners, academics, and students dedicated to the sport marketing industry. In October, Dr. Alan Morse traveled with one of our Sport Administration graduate students, Julie Rhoads, to Philadelphia, PA at the annual Sports Marketing Association Conference where they presented research that Julie is working on for her thesis.

Julie Rhoads shares her experience of her time at the conference: “My experience at the conference was amazing. I currently work for the Department of Recreational Sports as the Facilities and Sport Club Coordinator so being able to see sport in a different manner was incredible. The conference had many of the top industry researchers there. Listening to the current research being completed by others and what professional sports are looking for from academia was truly eye opening. Another aspect that was interesting to me is being able to meet the people who wrote the text books I used during my studies at Mississippi State University. Overall, the time at the conference was an amazing and blessed experience for me.”



Dr. Alan Morse (left) and Julie Rhoads (right) at the Sports Marketing Association Conference presenting research on Julie's thesis.

## Alumni Updates: Where are they now?

**Gary Wilbert II** (M.S. Sport Administration, 2012) is the Manager of Ticket Sales and Service at Towson University in Baltimore, MD. He is responsible for generating revenue through outbound calls and prospecting new business. He also implements new strategies to build better customer relationships with Towson University and their fans. He wants to encourage current students to network and take advantage of any opportunity to meet individuals in the sport industry.

# Alumni Updates Continued

**Michael Draper** (B.S. in Sport Communication, 2008) is the Senior Program Director of the YMCA of Snohomish County in Everett, WA. He oversees the membership, wellness, youth sports, active older adults, and aquatics departments for the Everett YMCA. He wants to tell current students that there is something special about serving the community and providing people a place of encouragement while helping them grow in spirit, mind, and body.

**Kevin Maloney** (B.S. in Sport Communication, 2005) is the Sports Information Director at Northwest Mississippi Community College. He is responsible for promoting a twelve sport athletic department that competes in the NJCAA. His advice to current students is to apply everywhere and do not be afraid to get turned down. It can make you work that much harder.

**Nate Thomas** (M.S. in Sport Administration, 2012) is the Athletic Academic Coordinator at Iowa State University, in Ames, Iowa. He is responsible for monitoring the academic success for the Iowa State Men's and Women's Track & Field, Cross Country, Golf, and Tennis programs. His advice to current students is to not be afraid of going outside your comfort level.

**Taylor Blakely** (B.S. in Sport Communication, 2009) is the Coordinator of Athletic Marketing and Promotions at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. He oversees all marketing and promotions for Oakland University Athletics including the creation, implementation, and execution of all marketing initiatives. He also supervises the band, dance, and cheer programs. His advice to students trying to start a career in the sport industry is to volunteer or intern as often as possible.

**Zackary Vosen** (M.S. in Sport Administration, 2013) is a Kinesiology Instructor at Mississippi College in Clinton, Mississippi. He says he is very proud of his educational experience at Mississippi State. He appreciates that each professor went to great lengths to ensure that each class prepared students for their futures in the field. His advice to current students in the program is when looking for potential employment opportunities is to be exhaustive and let employers know how you can be an asset to him.

## Stay Connected

Network with MSU Sport Administration and Sport Studies students and alumni by visiting the program on social media:

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[www.linkedin.com/  
groups?gid=4012990](http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4012990)



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