A Guide To Working In Sports Writing

Public and Professional Writing Independent Study
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So, you want to work in Sports?

Journalism, Sales, Marketing, Community Relations—what’s it all about?

Growing up, I, like many others, molded my life around playing sports. It was my priority every weekend and the topic at many dinner time talks. However, I quickly realized if I wanted to keep sports alive in my life after playing basketball in high school, I was going to have to enter the field in a different way. Quickly after this, I started researching working in sports. So, congratulations, you have already taken the first step toward working in sports!

You may be thinking, what grounds does this girl have to educate me on working within the sports industry? After all, she is still an undergraduate at a university in no-so-exciting, Pennsylvania. If this is your first thought, I will admit, I do not have any full-time experience so far in my career. But, I have been fortunate enough to experience the sports world first-hand, through internships and shadowing experiences and have been even more fortunate to land a full-time position within this field even before graduation.

In an effort to educate myself, and hopefully you, I have put together this guide to working in sports. I have always thought to myself, and I’m sure you have to if you are reading this, “When will Pitt ever offer a major or even one class in the field of sports?” In a sports-obsessed city like Pittsburgh, this question may never be answered. But, until that day does come, I hope that this work will act as your guide while navigating the cutthroat world of sports.

Read on to find out about the multitude of different jobs within sports and hear from successful professionals in the field as they detail their path to success. Some of the information may seem hard to swallow, but remember, there are thousands of passionate sports-fans dreaming of working in the industry. If you are truly dedicated to working in this field and, like me, have dreamed about this career your whole life, keep on reading—and remember, if these professionals can be successful in this field, so can you!

Knowing the Whole Truth—Pros and Cons

What are some of the cons of working in sports?

When one imagines a career in sports, they don’t always tend to think about the negatives that this field has—trust me, some of these facts never even crossed my mind. When Mark Cuban, famous billionaire and owner of the Dallas Mavericks, was asked about working in sports, he answered, “The sports industry is the worst business for a college graduate to try and get into. It doesn’t pay crap and a thousand people are applying for every job.” Now, of course, this is not completely true. But, these statements do hold some weight with the current trends in the field.

The main thing that you will always hear about when talking about why you shouldn’t go into the spots field is the pay. That, unfortunately, is very true. Many entry-level positions start with an hourly wage, usually around $10-$15—and, don’t forget, you will need to have an internship within this field if you are even thinking about getting an entry-level job. Even better—these are usually unpaid! Or in some cases you will earn minimum wage, which you will actually be thankful for.

Even with this lack of pay, the competition to get into this field is tough. Just recently I talked with a Human Resource employee with the Pittsburgh Pirates and learned that there were over 300 applications for an entry-level position with the Pirates. They hired only 3 of those. The competitiveness to make it in sports is at an all-time high, especially with the popularity of this field growing. Setting yourself apart from your competitors is a necessity.

Next, the hours. You may think accounting and finance
professionals put in a lot of hours in a year, but attending and working 81 home baseball games each year. This leads to the next problem many face when fir first entering this field— you are no longer a fan. You always run into those right-out-of-college employees who think that working in sports will feel as glamorous as playing. Think again— while you work these 81 games you normally won't even have time to see when inning or time it is.

Lastly, job turnover in sports is one of the highest in any industry. You should expect to move around often within your first couple of years. You will learn this finding the position you will ultimately end up in isn’t as easy as you think it is. But, on the other side, this will present many new opportunities and new places that you wouldn’t otherwise live in.

Now, what about the pros of working in the field?

If you think that you can get past all of the not-so-fun things mentioned above, then this may be the career for you! Now although this field has negative aspects, there are even more positives. First, the good news is that even with a bumpy economy, the sports industry continues to grow and thrive.

In its annual industry outlook, a document detailing the challenges, trends, and strategies for businesses in the coming year, PwC projects a 4.8% annual growth in the sports field over the next five years, from $53.6 billion in 2012 to $67.7 billion in 2017. This projection is a healthy increase from the smaller 3% annual growth rate of the previous five years. You may think, what does this mean for me? It means, if you prove your worth and are successful within your position, you can count on good job security— because, let’s face it, people will always want to attend sporting events.

Next, sports tend to have a great work environment. The nature of sports, low pay and long hours, tends to lend itself more to a younger crowd. You will see as you enter the field that the majority of people in the office are similar in age, and think about it, you already have something in common— you love sports!

Think back to some of your favorite childhood memories. Now, did at least one of them have some sort of sporting event in it? The biggest perk of the job— you literally, get to create life-long memories for people. That could be in journalism, putting out an article that someone can keep for the rest of his or her life detailing a game they attended. Or even sales— selling that suite for a family reunion that they will never forget. Sports give its employees the opportunity to do this for others.

Lastly, and most importantly, everyone in this industry has a passion for what they do. With all of the negatives mentioned above, you must have a huge desire to work in the field. Plus, even if you do obtain an entry-level position— if you want to stay with that team you need to set yourself apart immediately. This leads to everyone coming to work every day excited about what they are doing and wanting to be there. You won’t have to deal with the miserable co-workers in this field.

“Bottom line, working in sports challenges me mentally every day— it’s so much more than most people assume it to be.”

-Angela Deeb, Cal Athletics Account Executive
Journalism in Sports

Sports journalism remains a constantly evolving field, with new jobs always being invented to keep up with the technological advancements. Back in the day, there was one type of sports journalism—reporting on what happened during a game. Now, you can do multiple things with a degree and experience within this field. Let’s break it down simply:

- **Sports Reporter**— tells the facts and describes a news or sporting event.
- **Sports Columnist**— reports news stories but adds personal opinions, style, and experiences to the story.
- **Sports Blogger**— similar to an online columnist, comments about news stories or informs readers about important events.
- **Sports Author**— writes books about sports, athletes, other sports personalities, or sporting events.

These four jobs, obviously not the only career paths within sports journalism, are all very popular right now. With online journalism and publications taking precedent over print, this field has seen a swift change.

However, the jobs are not the only thing changing within this field. With the popularity of this field growing, we have seen a big change—universities now offer sports journalism as a major; something we would never have even thought about 10 years ago.

Just this past September, Arizona State University’s Cronkite School of Journalism & Mass Communication debuted its bachelor and master degree programs in sports journalism— the first standalone degree program for a specific beat and perhaps the first of its kind nationwide. Other universities were quick to follow— The University of Georgia recently added a sports journalism certificate program—with three times as many students applying than accepted.

These programs are not just teaching their students how to write for sports— they also give them real world experience in the community. The Cronkite School has a very hands-on curriculum, including a spring training program that allows the students to cover Major League Baseball teams for outlets across the country.

Michigan State now even sends their students to Paris and Rome in the summer to study Olympic history, international soccer, and how the media treats athletes in different cultures.

With these majors popping up around the country, there is no doubt that we will see an influx of students entering this career. This means, the competition, already very tough in the field, is going to get more competitive. Keep reading on to hear from successful professionals within this field—both how they got to where they are now and advice for young students looking to break into the

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**Fun Fact!**

The first radio broadcast of a baseball game was in August, on KDKA in Pittsburgh, PA. Harold W. Arlin announced a game between the the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Philadelphia Phillies.
Professional Profile: Laken Litman—Reporter, *USA Today Sports*

Laken Litman is currently a reporter for *USA Today Sports*. She previously worked as a correspondent for ESPN’s on-campus program while she attended the University of Texas at Austin. In addition, she worked with *D Magazine* and *Sports Illustrated* as an editorial intern. Since college, she has worked for a variety of different journalism outlets, including being a blogger for *The Dallas Morning News*, a stringer for *The Associated Press*, a freelance reporter for *The Dallas Morning News*, and a writer/reporter for Fox Sports.

**What did you major in?**
During my time at the University of Texas at Austin, I majored in Journalism and completed a certificate in Sports, where I learned about different sports fields and management techniques.

**How did you break into the sports field?**
While in college, I wrote for the student newspaper for almost the entire time. That helped me develop clips that I later used to obtain internships. Also during my college years, I had an internship with *Sports Illustrated* and *D Magazine*, I received both with help from my university. Just connecting with different people and different organizations was very helpful; they got me different stringer and freelance jobs to help build my clips even more. With that, I started the student news blog for *The Dallas Morning News*. I acted as the student correspondent for the football and basketball team during my junior and senior year, which once again helped me develop my clips.

**Did you find it difficult being a woman within the sports field?**
No, I did not see it as a barrier in all honesty; I never really thought about it. I was the only female on the sports staff but I never felt that I received different treatment.

**What is The Association for Women in Sports Media and what is your role?**
AWSM is a volunteer-managed, 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded in 1987 as a support network and advocacy group for women who work in sports writing, editing, broadcast and production, and public and media relations. I act as the internship coordinator, so I essentially place students in different internships. With the help from other committee members, I evaluate applicants and place them accordingly.

**What advice do you have for someone who wants to become a sports journalist?**
College is the time to take on as many opportunities as you can. Sometimes with schoolwork, internships, and jobs it may seem overwhelming, but you can’t ever say “no” to an offer. If you are thinking, can I really take this on? Of course, you can! Accept everything you possibly can to make connections and relationships. You have the capability now to learn more about sports than you ever imagined. The more clips you have in your portfolio, the more people will want to hire you— when you begin your career, anything you can show will be beneficial.

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Professional Profile: Tony Defazio—Editor, *Pittsburgh Sports Report (PSR)*

Tony Defazio is the Editor of the *Pittsburgh Sports Report* (PSR), an online and monthly print publication. Before this, Tony worked in a variety of print media for the following companies— *KidsSports*, *Keystone Recruiting*, and the PSR web site. He mainly covers college and high-school sports as well as recruiting and boxing. His November 2007 feature on Steelers’ defensive coordinator Dick LeBeau was nominated for a Golden Quill Award, a competition that recognizes professional excellence in written, photographic, broadcast, and online journalism in Western Pennsylvania.
What university did you attend and what was your major?
I attended the University of Pittsburgh and majored in Writing, which at the time was essentially a Journalism major.

What made you want to get into the sports journalism field?
I really have a passion for sports and, as I got older and started playing more sports, I realized if I wanted to make a living in sports I needed to enter the field in a way other than playing. However, it wasn’t the field that I started in right away. I had several years of work experience outside of sports, which I think helped me get into the field.

How did you “break into the field”? What experiences helped you get there?
I began my career working in public relations, not related to sports. However, then I got a job with West Virginia University, working in their athletics department. This was a great introduction to the sports field. I also worked with non-profits and corporate relations when I started my career. About 15 years ago, I acted as the public relations director for the Special Olympics in PA. I worked around sports often, even though the job was not directly in that field, and it helped me meet many people within the industry. After making connections within the sports field, I started to freelance for the Pittsburgh Sports Report and finally received a call from the owner to work for them full time in 2003.

What are your exact job responsibilities as an Editor of a sports publication?
I am a “jack of all trades” due to the size of PSR, a very small publication. I complete the following tasks for the paper— putting together business proposals for advertisers, all editorial decisions, and hiring writers. We used to have a big freelance staff with numerous big names; however, since we had to cut back, due to the hard economic times, we started to recruit college students to take part in our unpaid internships and also sought out some young writers to help them obtain more clips. With my other job responsibilities, I also hire photographers and work with our different partners, mainly companies that want to have some presence in the sports world— for example, sports medicine hospitals. In addition, I do anything I can to promote the paper— whether it be through social media or appearing on radio shows.

What is your biggest advice to people looking to break into this field?
Write as much as you possibly can. Whether you want to get involved in broadcasting, TV, radio, or social media— writing is always important. Take unpaid internships, just to get your name out there with contacts within the industry. I have seen that year by year there are not as many talented writers. Volunteer to write for any student website— even start your own blog. Act patient, and understand the field you want to work in. Each year there are fewer opportunities because of more applicants— sometimes you may even have to have another job on the side.
The administrative offices are the side of sports that people do not discuss often. These employees work to maximize revenue for a sports team, advertise and market the team, and take care of the day-to-day operations. Some of the departments within the administrative offices, which will be covered in more detail in the following section are as followed—sales, public relations, marketing, and community relations. Continue reading to find out how to obtain a job in one of these departments, the skills necessary, and interviews with successful employees within this field!

Talk the Talk- A Glossary for Sales in Sports

This glossary will help you more fully understand the next section in this independent study, outlining sales in sports. The following terms are used throughout the section.

**Inside Sales**— This position is the most logical starting point for a career in sports sales. Teams usually hire from 10 to 15 reps for this department to learn the basic of sales in sports. At the end of the season, the highest producers will get promoted into full-time positions on one of the ticket sales teams.

**Account Executive**— These sales reps are responsible for maximizing revenue for the Ticket Sales Department, through the sales of season tickets, group tickets, and suites. Some teams will break up their account executives within the following departments—

**Group Sales**— This department places their efforts in creating and selling group experiences. Some examples of group experiences are Jewish heritage night, wine night, beer tastings during a game, and Star Wars nights.

**New Business Sales**— This department focuses on recruiting new businesses within the area to buy either group outings or suites for an office event. They participate in many out of the office sales calls, where they will go to a business and present different ticket packages to their employees.

**Premium and Suite Sales**— Sales reps within this department focus on selling different suite packages to clients and work alongside the new business sales reps.

**Retention Sales**— This department focuses heavily on customer service. They deal with already existing season ticket member accounts, servicing them year-to-year.
Sales in Sports— What Is It All About?

Before obtaining my internship with the Pittsburgh Pirates, I had no idea the power that sales had in sports, or more specifically the importance of this department within a sports team. Just this past year, Brian Clapp, a writer, editor, producer, and news director within the sports industry, released an article putting this idea into numbers. In May of 2014, when Clapp wrote the article, 5,939 sports jobs were currently listed on TeamWork Online, the major website for sports jobs. Now, how many of those jobs would you believe were within sales? Drum roll, 3,155! That means that currently 53% of the jobs active in the sports industry deal with some kind of sales.

If this percentage is not compelling enough, take the opinion of Bernie Mullin, former president of the NBA team, Atlanta Hawks. In an interview with Forbes, Mullin stated, “The kids don’t want sales, but that’s where the jobs exist. They need to understand it is all about butts in seats.” But the real question remains—what does a sales department within a major sports team do?

The most logical path for one to take within sales is as follows: inside sales, account executive, and senior account executive—see the glossary above this section for further information. Inside sales is the one position that may not appeal to a newly minted college graduate. These positions, as mentioned before, usually start at $10 an hour plus commission, and run on a seasonal timeline. This means that you are employed and sign a contract with a sports team for anywhere from 9 to 13 months. You can look at this time almost as a try-out; if you succeed, they may keep you within this organization in an upper-level sales position, and if nothing happens to be available in their organization they may help you find a job somewhere else. This position does not offer guarantees or a secure job placement. However, from personal experience, I have seen the success that this program offers—most of the upper-level sales staff with the Pittsburgh Pirates started in an inside sales program.

Once you graduate past this level, you move into an account executive position. This is where it starts to get tricky, as many different sports organizations will separate and run their sales departments differently.

One of the most common ways of doing so has different departments for the varying types of ticket packages. For example, within the Pirates organization, there are the following departments—group sales, new business sales, premium and suite sales, and retention sales. Now, although this remains the most common structure, other teams also structure their departments differently. Take the Oakland Athletics, for example; they do not have different specialties within their sales department, giving their account executives the freedom to sell a variety of different ticket packages.

The statistics given earlier are not meant to scare people out of their hopes and dreams of entering sports within a different department, such as marketing or PR, but rather to show one of the main ways people get into these departments. Keep in mind—your first job within the sports industry does not have to be the job you stay in your whole career; more often than not it won’t. Do not feel discouraged if you cannot find a job within the marketing or PR department right away—this may just exist as an opportunity to try something else before transitioning to those jobs. Just as Angela Deeb, Account Executive with the Cal Athletics stated, “There are more sports sales jobs than any other segment in the industry because sales remain the fundamentals behind any business; it is the “get your foot into the door” step. But these are not just normal sales positions—a sports sales job uses multiple disciplines of business including marketing, research, analytics, customer service, and economics.” Professional sports teams focus on fan identification, fan happiness, and the economic status of both fans and the city; so, sales reps learn all of the skills mentioned above. Now, with all this experience on your resume, don’t you think it will be easier to apply for that marketing or PR role you always wanted?

“The primary message, and or the primary purpose of a sports sales combine is to provide attendees with a glimpse into the real world of sales.”
- Corey Brenton, Senior Director of Ticket Sales for the Atlanta Hawks
What University did you attend and what was your major?

I actually attended multiple universities. I started my college career at the University of Pittsburgh, majoring in Film Studies. I later transferred to Robert Morris University and literally picked my sports management major out of a book.

How did your career develop to where you are now?

I started my career in Chicago, where I worked for International Sports Management. It was not a very glamorous job— I didn’t get paid much and had to make many phone calls during the day. We sold corporate packages to major sports events that included hospitality and speaking events. For example, when we worked with PGA, my firm would have a tent on the green and we sold packaged tickets to the event— these events would have food, gifts, and a speaker would come, so as you can tell, they were high-end packages. This was a very difficult job— I didn’t have a computer, I had to call up to 300 people per day, and trying to sell the ticket packages remained difficult because of the expensive price.

I later moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where I got a job with the Memphis Grizzlies— previously located in Vancouver. Right around the time I moved to Tennessee they switched locations. I got an entry-level job there; during this time they hired twice as many sales reps as needed because they had three months to sell ticket packages before the season started. So, we all had to sell a lot in a short amount of time. They hired me along with 24 other people for a 3-month contract, after which they would reevaluate and hire only 12 of us. Three months came and went and I continued to work there for 4 years.

After these 4 years, I decided to move back to Pittsburgh to be closer to my family. I got a job with the Pirates right away and started in a department similar to new business. Back then sales in sports, especially sales with the Pirates, was structured very differently. The Pirates had my co-worker, Teri, and I, focus on selling suites and premium seating. At the time this type of seating was very under-utilized, both because of economic times and the team’s poor performance.

Now, in my current position as a senior account executive, I handle all the premium seats with the higher-end clients. I handle $7 million and the most accounts, 1,031— I am responsible for renewing all of these accounts each year. It is a great job and one that I enjoy doing every day.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to break into the sports field?

Become prepared to work in ticket sales because it is where all of the jobs are, producing revenue is what a sports team needs. With the Pirates, we have 60 people working in the sales department and only 3 in marketing— so, you do the math. I didn’t know I wanted to get into sales right away, but I took this path and it worked out for me. However, even if it doesn’t work out, don’t get discouraged— maybe sales is right for you, maybe not. Don’t stress about your first job being the one you will stay with your entire life— trust me, I never thought I would end up where I work now when I took my first job in Chicago.
Marketing and Public Relations in Sports

Marketing

Effective sport marketing focuses upon building and reading fan identification. The most fundamental section of this consists of one simple part—knowledge of the individual fan. Equipped with this knowledge, the marketing department within a sports team develops ticket plans and other marketing strategies to meet the desires of the fans. The employees design different ticket packages to meet the needs and wants of the fans, which in turn generates revenue for the organization. The Sports Marketing Association has developed a concise and detailed definition: **Sports marketing is building a highly identified, passionate fan base such that fans, sponsors, media and government pay to promote and support the organization for the benefits of social exchange and personal, group and community identity within a cooperative competitive environment.**

This job title also consists of event planning. This responsibility of the marketing director, although somewhat self-explanatory, entails many game-day events, planning pre-game and post-game activities, and ensuring the success of outside activities such as community and philanthropic initiatives.

Public Relations

Public relations helps establish and later maintain lines of communication and understanding among a team, athlete, league, and organization. This department prepares media kits, arranges media interviews, books player appearances, handles crises, and maintains the teams website and blog. Other than journalism, this job remains the most writing heavy career in sports, encompassing both professional and creative writing.

Although writing has remained very important within this career, it has seen many changes within the last two decades, mainly in response to technological advances. Before these changes sports PR employees were in the business of telling stories, mainly in print media. Today, there is a huge focus on constantly updated media guides, a press kit distributed as a book or binder, and published by American sporting teams before the start of the sporting season. These guides must be produced in the most sophisticated formats to keep up with the changing times. This makes the knowledge of InDesign, HTML, and Photoshop a necessity in this field.

Professional Profile: John Simpson—Marketing and Events Manager, The Pittsburgh Steelers

John Simpson started his career working in retail, spanning from discount retail to athletic gear. He now is with the Steelers as the team’s Events and Marketing Manager. His main responsibilities include corporate sales, database marketing, game-day responsibilities, and running the organization's internship program.

**What University did you attend and what was your major?**
I attended Indiana University of PA, majoring in Business Management with an Accounting concentration.

**What made you want to get into the sports field?**
It was my goal in life to work for the Pittsburgh Steelers on the business side of the operation.

**How did you “break into the field?”**
I worked in retail for 19 years after graduation. I always wanted to work for the Steelers and understood it needed to be in marketing. I kept working on my selling skills and people skills to network to find the right opportunity at the right time. That finally occurred on November 10, 1998.

**What do your exact job responsibilities consist of?**
My job has numerous; however, I am mainly responsible for organization and execution of all Steelers marketing events during the course of each season. I work with recruitment, interviewing, training, and evaluation for all students for the Marketing Internship Program during the spring, summer, and fall seasons. In addition, I plan all marketing aspects of Steelers Training Camp including all fan engagement, VIP Hospitality area, and day-to-day activities—including social media contests, flow of fans,
and meet and greets with players. On the other hand, my various game-day responsibilities include executing pre-game field pass program for our sponsors, coordinating the distribution of all Game Day Giveaways, and assisting in Color Guard position—the Color Guard performs before every game and I am responsible for positioning them on the field and coordinating their entrance.

What do you like the most and the worst about working in sports?

What I like most has to be seeing the satisfaction from our fans as we exceed their expectations at a marketing event. The worst, as all sports professionals with say—the amount of time needed to perform your tasks far exceeds the time available.

What would be your advice to someone looking to get into the field of sports?
Be prepared to work long hard hours and not necessarily be compensated accordingly. Working in sports needs to be your passion.

Intern Profile: Lindsey Spirk—Marketing Intern, The Pittsburgh Steelers

Lindsey, a senior Communication major at the University of Pittsburgh, has interned with the Pittsburgh Steelers since September of this year. She has developed her resume, gained real world experience, and had fun while doing it!

How did you find your internship?
I constantly search online for possible internships and jobs. I found the Steelers Marketing internship while browsing TeamWork Online.

What are your job responsibilities? Both in the office and on game-day?
I work 3 days a week in the office, focusing on marketing and execution of our Steelers loyalty fan program—Steelers Nation Unite. I assist in finding new ways to develop and grow our program, since it was only started about a year and a half ago. I also work in customer service, answering any emails, phone calls, and mail.

Game days are the best part for me. I get to see all of my hard work in the office pay off. I mainly focus on making sure all of the Steelers Nation Unite members are fully engaged and having the best experience possible. I also assist in on-field experiences with our award members, conduct interviews, and surprise fans with Steelers Unite gifts in their seats.

Do you feel that this internship prepared you to find a career in sports?
I can not say enough how much this internship with the Steelers has helped prepare me for a career in sports. I have had multiple internships before this one, and I have gained more experience so far with the Steelers than I have with any of my other internships. I do a great deal of real, relevant work that I know is important to help the organization and program grow. I remain hopeful for my future with the Steelers as I am nearing graduation.

Pictures:
Top Left- Lindsey posing with famous country singer, Chase Rice, before he performs on field during half-time.
Bottom Left- Lindsey posing with Steely Dan, the Pittsburgh Steelers mascot.
Community Relations Department

The community relations department within a sports team manages many different tasks, both in the office and out in the community. They primarily deal with managing a team’s outreach to charities and fundraising efforts. They coordinate donation requests, auctions, writing and editing news releases, and engaging with local journalists to get events covered. In addition, they also overlap and work closely with the marketing departments in many ways. They are always looking to broaden their network and gain more exposure. This leads to one of their main goals—brand recognition. It is important for a sports team, or any business in general, to have a positive connotation with their logo or brand name. This department strives to both help the community and make a name for themselves.

Professional Profile: Chaz Kellem—Manager of Diversity Initiatives, The Pittsburgh Pirates

Chaz Kellem posing in front of PNC Park

Chaz is responsible for engaging the Pirates with the Pittsburgh community through volunteer opportunities, such as vision and dental screening for youth, disability awareness celebrations at PNC Park, Latino and African American celebrations, and the Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) initiative in conjunction with the Boys and Girls Club.

What university did you attend/what was your major?
I attended Edinboro University of PA and majored in Health and Physical Education with a concentration in Sports Administration.

What made you want to get into the sports field?
You can learn many life lessons through sports and I aimed to use my skills set in a way that helped people but still impacted sports. I felt the best way I could do that was on the administrative office side. Accomplishing this through a community makes it even more powerful because you get to help, encourage, and inspire people. I just love sports and what it can accomplish and teach.

How did you “break into the field?” What was your first position?
I started in the inside sales department and later moved into group sales and was in that position for about a year and a half and then I transitioned into the role I remain in now, so this is my 10th season and 9th year.

Did you like working in sales?
Yes and no. I liked it because it maximized the potential money available. You had control of your own money, so you were in control of how much money you made by the effort that you put in. I did not like it because you had a number hanging over your head that you always had to achieve. It had pros and cons but I knew it was not where I wanted to spend my career.

What are your exact job responsibilities?
I am the manager of diversity and youth baseball initiatives. I oversee all of our diversity and multicultural programs as well as all of our charitable youth baseball and softball. I create, design, and implement multicultural and diverse programs for seven main audiences—African Americans, Asians, Latinos, the disabled, the underserved, the uninsured, and the LGBT population. Our department is designed to do three things—brand recognition, making sure when people see that gold “P” they understand the history and legacy represented by it, provide resources to those seven audiences, including ball park usage,
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promotional items, and game tickets, and finally connecting our audience with the game of baseball.

What do you like most and the worst about working in sports?
The best part must be that no day consists of the same things; I get to come to PNC Park to work every day in a very comfortable and relaxed work setting. The worst thing is the hour, and I wish the pay could be a little better.

What would be your advice to people looking to get into the field of sports?
Do the small things right; let the big things take care of themselves. Take on a leadership role when no one is watching. Network, but it is not about who you know; it is about who knows you— you have to stay relevant with your contacts. Think outside the box because where you start may not end up being your final destination. Never over plan— I think we sometimes think too much about 5 or 10 years down the line— you never know. When an opportunity presents itself, you have to prepare yourself to walk through that door and get ready to tackle whatever that task or job is.

On a Personal Note: A Summer Internship with The Pittsburgh Pirates

Wanting to work in sports for much of my life, I was thrilled to find out that I obtained an internship with the Pirates organization. However, I will admit, the road there was not easy.

How I Got There

As I have stated multiple times throughout this guide, working in sport is extremely competitive. Up to 300 or 400 people may apply to one job posted online, so the real question remains— how do you set yourself apart? Network, network, network. Also, when 300 people apply for one position, the human resource representatives are not going to have the time or patience to go through every single resume. If you even want to get an interview, you have to know someone.

Now, to the next question– how do you network? What worked for me was reaching out to the Career Services office.
at my university. Many students will ignore the countless emails that we receive from career services daily, but, they are very helpful! No matter what university you attend, make sure to check out their career services page or office; they are there to help us as students, and, your tuition fees go towards these resources.

My big break came from the Office of Career Services when they sent out a campus-wide email offering a “Panther Shadow” day with the Pittsburgh Pirates at PNC Park. During this day, other students and I met multiple managers within the Pirates organization, were given lunch, and given a tour of the most beautiful ballpark in America. I later kept in contact with the managers I met and turned this shadow into an internship. So, I will reiterate—do not ignore these emails or opportunities, because they may end up changing you future like they did mine!

What Was It Like?

Interning with the Pirates was both what I expected and completely different. The first week mainly focused on getting to know the other interns as well as others in the office. During the summer, there were nine interns in my department, Ticket Sales and Services.

Our main responsibility in the office was to both run and advertise the social clubs within the Pirates organization—the Bucaroos Kids Club, with over 13,000 members and bringing in $35,000 in revenue, and Lady Bucs Club, with around 200 members. Throughout my time, the interns and I were entrusted with planning our own autograph session, Q&A session with the players, and batting practice. These experiences were invaluable, both for talking about in future job interviews and for understanding more fully the workings of a Major League Baseball team.

In addition to managing these clubs, I had the opportunity to shadow and work with different employees within the office. However, these chances never got simply handed to me, it remained my responsibility to reach out to the different departments. This is another lesson that I learned from this internship—put yourself out there and get to know people in the office. If you simply fly under the radar and do not make a name for yourself in the office, finding a job within this industry will be even more difficult.

The general attitude towards internships within the sports industry is that you get paid nothing to do the grunt work in the office. Obviously, as I just said, that proves not completely true. However, some of those less glamorous tasks— filing, mailing, and data entry, will be tasks for interns. While spending the summer in Pittsburgh, I earned the least money and worked the most hours in comparison to my friends—as I stated before, don’t go into sports for the money, unless you are Andrew McCutchen! With that, there will be days that seem monotonous and grueling, but you have to fight past those. Interning within the sports industry will both kick-start your career and help you make connections all throughout the country, which will one day hopefully lead to a full-time position.

Where Did It Get Me?

It is one thing to listen to someone say that an internship will help you for your future; but, completely different to see it first-hand. I am fortunate enough to use my experience and connections to land a full-time position within the sports industry. By chatting with people around the office and branching out to contact people who used to work at the Pirates, I became aware of a position with the Oakland Athletics. After some persistence and three interviews, I was offered a full-time sales position with this organization. I have since accepted this position and will start my new role as an Account Executive in January of 2016.
Women in Sports—The Progression

In the early 1970s, the Associated Press estimated that only about 25 women had sports writing jobs and about five women were involved in sports-casting on radio and television (“Associated Press Estimate,” 1970). By 1975, that estimate had already quadrupled (Lapin, 1975).

Women’s participation in sports has been increasing drastically since this dismal statistic was recorded back in 1970. We now start to see more and more women both in sports journalism and on the administrative side of sports. However, these numbers still do not remain where they need to be. The Association for Women in Sports Media (AWSM) has been taking steps to decrease this gap and integrate more women into the field. This membership based club, now with over 600 men and women, focuses on placing young women in both sports internships and careers.

Mary Bryme, senior deputy editor for the NFL, NGL, and motorsports at ESPN.com and also AWSM president, still sees the lack of women in sports every day in the office and at national conferences. “When I meet with APSE, The Associated Press Sports Editors, I count. The number of women has gone up, but this count still remains low. But what stays important to me is that we need to have people with different viewpoints. There are many really smart women in journalism, and I want them to join APSE. People who make hiring decisions are in that, too.”

This problem, obviously one that has been around for decades, again seems to have improved, but the real question is—how do we help even more? Bryme, along with many other leading women in sports agree, this increase needs to start with women in leadership positions. “I’m a big believer in if you see it, you can believe it. If you have women in leadership roles, it can become more attainable to people.”

With progression happening every day, it remains important to focus on what each person can do to better this problem. Recruiting more women for leadership roles is just the beginning. With the field of sports becoming more and more popular each year—many are hopeful this gap will continue to close and one day we will see an even distribution of men and women in sports.

Professional Profile: Britny Paden—Manager Ticket Sales and Services, The Pittsburgh Pirates

What university did you attend and what was your major?
I attended Armstrong State University and majored in Economics.

How did you get to where you are now?
I started my career in the hospitality and hotel business. I worked at smaller hotels until I landed a regional sales manager position with Marriot in 2010. I stayed in that position for four years until I transitioned over to the events and operations side of the business, where I stayed for about a year. After moving out of the Atlanta to Pittsburgh for family reasons I found my current position with the Pittsburgh Pirates. I currently manage the Ticket Sales and Services floor, mainly overseeing the customer service staff as well as the internship program.

Do you find it difficult as a women in the sports field, especially in a manager position?
Not at all. Luckily there are many other women in leadership roles within the Pirates organization, so I do not feel as though it is a disadvantage. I think recently a trend has emerged of more and more women entering the sports world, leaving behind the stereotype that for women breaking into the sports field was difficult. Also, especially within the Pirates organization I never feel treated differently based on my gender.
Pulling It All Together

Overwhelmed yet? Don’t worry I felt that way too. As you can see, there is more to working in sports than just being the General Manager or a famous sports commentator. If you feel passionate about working in this field and want to enter it through journalism or the administrative offices, now is the time to take the advice of the working professionals, chronicled throughout this work, and start to develop your resume.

With hundreds of people competing for an unpaid—yes, unpaid—internship, it may be hard to even get your first break. But, keep working hard, and of course network. Be proactive and reach out to sports professionals within the area, even some of the people in this guide! One thing that I have learned throughout my journey in this field: everyone is willing to help, so many people got their first job or internship through reaching out to a complete stranger.

So, if you still think sports is the career for you—check out the below links and start looking for that first big break now!

Where to Start? Resources For a Career in Sports

Now that you know you want to work in sports, where do you start?

Job Postings

Employers Website, example: Pittsburgh Pirates Homepage-
http://pittsburgh.pirates.mlb.com/mlb/help/jobs.jsp?c_id=pit
Simply by going onto a professional team’s website you can find an entire list of job openings. Normally these sites will have a “careers” tab to click on.

TeamWork Online- http://www.teamworkonline.com/
A portal to sports jobs, employment, career and internships with the NBA, NHL, NFL, MLB, MLS, NASCAR, LPGA, and more. With over 800 organizations registered, and around 95,000 hires since it began—this is the best tool to use when looking and applying for a job in sports.

Other Helpful Websites

Look into joining the below societies for even more internship and job postings:
American Society of Journalists and Authors- asja.org
National Association for Girls and Women in Sports- aahperd.org/nagws
Women’s Sports Foundation- womensportsfoundation.org
Public Relations Society of America- prsa.org

My Contact Information

Online Portfolio: http://alissapersichetti.weebly.com/
LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/alissa-persichetti-7a928890
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**Books**


**Visuals**

- **Pittsburgh Pirates Stadium**- pg. 1
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- **Journalism**- pg. 2
- **Chaz Kellem**- pg. 3
- **Angela Deeb**- pg.3
  Photo Courtesy of Angela Deeb - Facebook
- **Rachel Lenzi**- pg. 4
- **Laken Litman**- pg. 5
  Photo courtesy of Laken Litman - Facebook
- **Tony Defazio**- pg. 6
  Photo courtesy of Tony DeFazio - Facebook
- **Administrative Offices**- pg. 7
- **Ticket Window**- pg. 7
- **Sales Presentation**- pg. 8
- **Jordan Wadsworth**- pg. 9
  Linkedin, Jordan Wadsworth
- **Lindsey Spirk**- pg. 11
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- **Chaz Kellem**- pg. 12/13
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- **Alissa Persichetti**- pg. 13/14
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- **Brityn Paden**- pg.15
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- **Steelers Field**- pg. 16
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