

SPRING 2018 NEWSLETTER

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

SPORT

MANAGEMENT



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Message from the Chair

May 5, 2018 was the end of another academic year. The 2017-2018 year was a banner year for our faculty members, staff and students. For the first time in many years, all our faculty positions and staff positions were filled. It was wonderful to operate fully staffed, and to have such qualified and friendly folks to work with. The hard work and dedication of our faculty members and students (both past and present) came to the attention of many with our selection by College Choice as the #1 Sport Management Master's program in the United States. We should all be proud of the department and our programs, and know that each has contributed to this recognition.

Having a full complement of faculty members and staff also means that we have experienced change over the past few years. In recent newsletters we have highlighted the new faculty members and staff that have joined our group. It is odd to think that I am have the longest tenure as a full-time member of the department. Honestly, I am not as old as some people may think. I am looking forward to more great accomplishments from the faculty members, students, and alumni. Starting in August 2018, we will experience one more change. For those who may not yet have heard. Dr. Damon Andrew, class of 2004, will be returning to Florida State University as Dean of the College of Education. I am personally very, very excited to have the chance to work once again with Dr. Andrew, this time under his leadership. I believe the college and department are both positioned for growth. We are planning to add new content areas to our degree programs, and will seek to add even more faculty members. Please stay in touch and find out what is happening in Tallahassee, and please keep us informed on what is happening with you.

Regards,

Dr. James

FSU Sport Management Program Ranked #1

By Ally Shortt

The Florida State University's Sport Management master's degree program recently received the honor of being named the #1 program in the nation by College Choice. You may wonder what goes into this ranking and how the Sport Management Department at FSU has set itself apart from the rest. College Choice has ranked us based on affordability, quality of education, reputation and student satisfaction. These elements, combined with outstanding faculty, a diverse student body and world class networking opportunities, have allowed the program to flourish.

This is an unparalleled program that challenges students to get involved in the sport industry from the beginning of their time here. Internships and gaining real world experience are major components of the program. Students are expected to complete at least one internship during their time here, and many go on to have multiple work experiences. Facility and Event Management, Sport and the Media, Sport Marketing, and Legal Issues in Sport are just a few of the classes that make up the curriculum. Additionally, our students are expected to engage in service learning opportunities around the community. These range from playing basketball at the Kearney Center to helping with Miracle League sports or volunteering at Bicycle House.

The Sport Management program does everything that it can to prepare students for the next level. Unique networking events, such as the annual conference during the fall, bring industry professionals from all over the nation to offer advice and internship opportunities for our students. This program goes beyond classes and work experience; the department also supports two student organizations that further extend opportunities for our students. The Sport Management Student Association and the Foundation



#1

for Diversity and Inclusion are two student groups that play a large part in allowing students to network within the program itself and create a community amongst themselves.

Personally, when making the decision to remain at Florida State University to get my master's degree, I found that the merits of the program itself were a big part of my decision. Walking through the halls of Tully, I feel surrounded by professors that truly care and want to create lasting relationships, along with fellow students who are working hard to reach similar goals. The networking opportunities that are available and the alumni network that is always reaching out to provide opportunities is a huge strength of the program, and something that you cannot replicate.

Fellow graduate student Will Hale echoed similar feelings. He speaks on the resources that Florida State has and the leadership within the program: "One of the first things I learned at Florida State was the importance of finding a mentor. I think Florida State Sport Management is the best because of the vast opportunities and resources that are available for students as well as the accessibility of world-class professors. Anytime I have a question, I know I can count on my professors to guide me in the right direction."

Alumni Spotlight: Kirsten Combs

By Justin Bachansingh

Finding your niche in the sport industry is an arduous process that takes experience and determination. Luckily, Kirsten Combs found the right support system through her FSU connections to find the position that had her name on it. Kirsten knew the sport industry was for her because it checked off her two requirements: 1. No cubicles, 2. Job security.

After realizing working in the sport industry was for her, she decided to complete a Master's of Science in Sport Management.

During her time at Florida State University, Kirsten worked at two internships: one for the St. Lucie Mets minor league baseball team, and the other for Power Mill Sports. Kirsten used the opportunity to get out of the classroom and network with professionals, and she would recommend other students do the same.

On top of her two internships, Kirsten helped start the Sport Management Student Association (SMSA). Starting with just 15 students and a desire to volunteer at the Super Bowl in New Orleans, Kirsten grew the SMSA into an organization of 60 during her two terms as president and treasurer. As part of the expansion of the SMSA, the group went on networking trips to Atlanta, GA and Tampa, FL, meeting with various teams such as the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, the Tampa Bay Rays, the Atlanta Falcons, and the Atlanta Braves.

Kirsten emphasized her desire to make the club recognizable to students and did so by creating memorable and valuable networking trips for these students, while also fighting to receive funding from the FSU Student Government Association. The Sport Management Student Association now has over 100 members, who participate in networking trips around the country, volunteer across Tallahassee and meet sport professionals in weekly meetings to gain valuable insight about the sport industry.

After gaining experiences around the country in various sections of the industry, Kirsten found her ideal job as the Strategic Alliance Coordinator for the Florida Lottery. In this position, Kirsten works to partner



with all the major colleges in the state of Florida to emphasize the value of Bright Futures Scholarships on college campuses. The Bright Futures Scholarships award students planning to attend college various levels of funding from the Florida Lottery that can pay most or all of a student's tuition, depending on their testing and school requirements. Through this funding and partnerships with these schools, the Florida Lottery can make an impact on communities throughout the state.

Kirsten is very grateful for the opportunities that Florida State offered her throughout her career. Following college, Kirsten was able to use her connection with Sport Management professor Jason Pappas in order to find connections in Nebraska and Phoenix. She also connected with various FSU alumni across the country that work in sport to create partnerships in her current position. "Being an alumna from Florida State has given me a huge network in this industry. It is great to know I was part of the best sport management program in the nation," Kirsten says.

The best advice Kirsten has for current students is to "expect the unexpected, especially in the sport industry." She emphasizes the large amount of turnover of professionals in this industry because promotion is so common and quickly attained. She stresses the importance of keeping good connections, because you never know where someone will end up. Kirsten also relays how valuable it is to be open to any and all opportunities that come your way, because any experience is good experience. In her own experience, she has seen how small steps in her career have brought her to new heights.

Alumni Spotlight: Courtney Rosa

By Morgan Costopoulos

Courtney Rosa knew she was destined to be a Seminole. She was introduced to FSU and all it had to offer from a very young age, as both of her parents studied at Florida State and her father played baseball for the university.

When Courtney began her studies, her plan was to obtain a degree in athletic training. She quickly realized this field was not for her. She decided sport management would be the most beneficial route, as she preferred to be on the business and marketing side of sport. Courtney earned a bachelor's degree in Sport Management with a minor in Business in 2014 followed by a Master's of Science in Sport Management in 2015. While working to earn her bachelor's degree, she was an active member in her sorority, Alpha Delta Pi, as well as a member of the Sport Management Student Association (SMSA).

During her time at FSU, she had the opportunity to work under the head coach of FSU baseball, Mike Martin, and began her sophomore year as a student assistant within the front office. She assisted the coaches with their recruiting database, helped maintain the registration process for the Mike Martin Baseball Schools and completed other day-to-day tasks.

As a master's student, Courtney continued to work in the baseball office, while also working with Dr. Pappas as a teaching assistant and interning at Tallahassee Community College (TCC). Courtney enjoyed her time as the athletics operations intern at TCC, where she helped coordinate travel arrangements for all four sport teams as well as assisted with game day setup and other operational tasks.

"I learned a lot at TCC because it's a smaller school. I had a lot more responsibility," Courtney says. She believes her experience working under such influential professionals has contributed to her development into a well-rounded individual.



Courtney currently works at Thomas University as the Student Activities Coordinator, where she is able to assist both student athletes and other students daily. She works hard with the university to build programs and create activities that bring the student population together to socialize and relax. She also plays an instrumental role in new student orientation and has discovered her passion for working in higher education.

Courtney's advice for students working toward entering the sport industry is to be persistent. She emphasizes the importance of working hard to obtain internships and to separate yourself from others. "Do every task that you're given to the best of your ability," Courtney says.

She believes it's crucial to be flexible and be willing to wear many hats in this industry. Doing so has allowed her to be successful in her career thus far. Courtney credits working closely with professionals in the industry as something that molded her into who she is today. She also emphasized the importance of using resources provided on campus: "Dr. Pappas is there from the beginning. Working with him helps you figure out what you want to do. He asks those questions that challenge you, and I probably would not have continued with sport management if it weren't for him." Her hard work and motivation are exactly what the Sport Management program aims to foster here at Florida State University.

Alumni Spotlight: Nadia Nixon

By Will Hale

Growing up in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, Nadia Nixon always had a passion for sports, and helping people. She grew up participating in the sport of dance, which played a major role in her life and education from the time she was in first grade until she was a senior in college.

Currently, Nadia Nixon serves as the defensive administrative assistant for Florida State Football. On February 16, I met with Nadia to discuss her academic journey and her love for sports. Because she is a graduate of the Florida State master's program, I wanted to learn about her story. We discussed her achievements and struggles as a student, love for helping people and for sports, and her future aspirations.

From Hattiesburg to Tallahassee

Following graduation from the University of Southern Mississippi with a bachelor's degree in mass communication in public relations, Nadia was on a mission to pursue her passion for sports and helping people. She chose Florida State University because one of her professors at Southern Mississippi graduated from Florida State. The professor "brought a group of us [students] to FSU to attend the Sport Management Conference in the Fall of 2015." When she came for the conference, she really enjoyed the campus and hearing all of the speakers. Although it was a little far from home, Nadia wanted to come to Florida State for a new challenge.

Sports, Mentors and Academics

Nadia participated in dance from the time she was in first grade until she was a senior in college. Her dance teacher in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, played a major role in helping mentor her and teach her about life and dance. "She took me under her wing and helped guide me," Nadia says. Academics did not come easy to her, so she had to push herself. "In high school, they did not have a lot of resources and I struggled," Nadia says. "When I got to college I had to push myself. When you are determined, you go for it." It is apparent Nadia has had both triumphs and struggles to get where she is



today.

Her hardest courses: Sport Law and Sport Marketing

Dr. Holden's Sport Law course and Dr. James' Sport Marketing course were the two toughest. "The information was very interesting and I enjoyed the classes, but it was tough!" Nadia says.

The classes that she enjoyed the most: Dr. Flanagan's diversity class and Dr. Pappas' professional development in sport.

Nadia really enjoyed hearing about the variety of speakers' experiences in Dr. Pappas' class. "The sport industry requires a lot of experience. I don't think there are other programs that have that opportunity to hear from these sport industry leaders," says Nadia. In Dr. Flanagan's class, she enjoyed learning about women who are professionals in sport and that their stories inspire her. "Dr. Flanagan emphasized the importance of women working in the sport industry and she challenged us to think critically about diversity in the sport industry."

What did you love most while at FSU?

Nadia says that her favorite part of FSU was "being around what I loved, which is sports and helping people

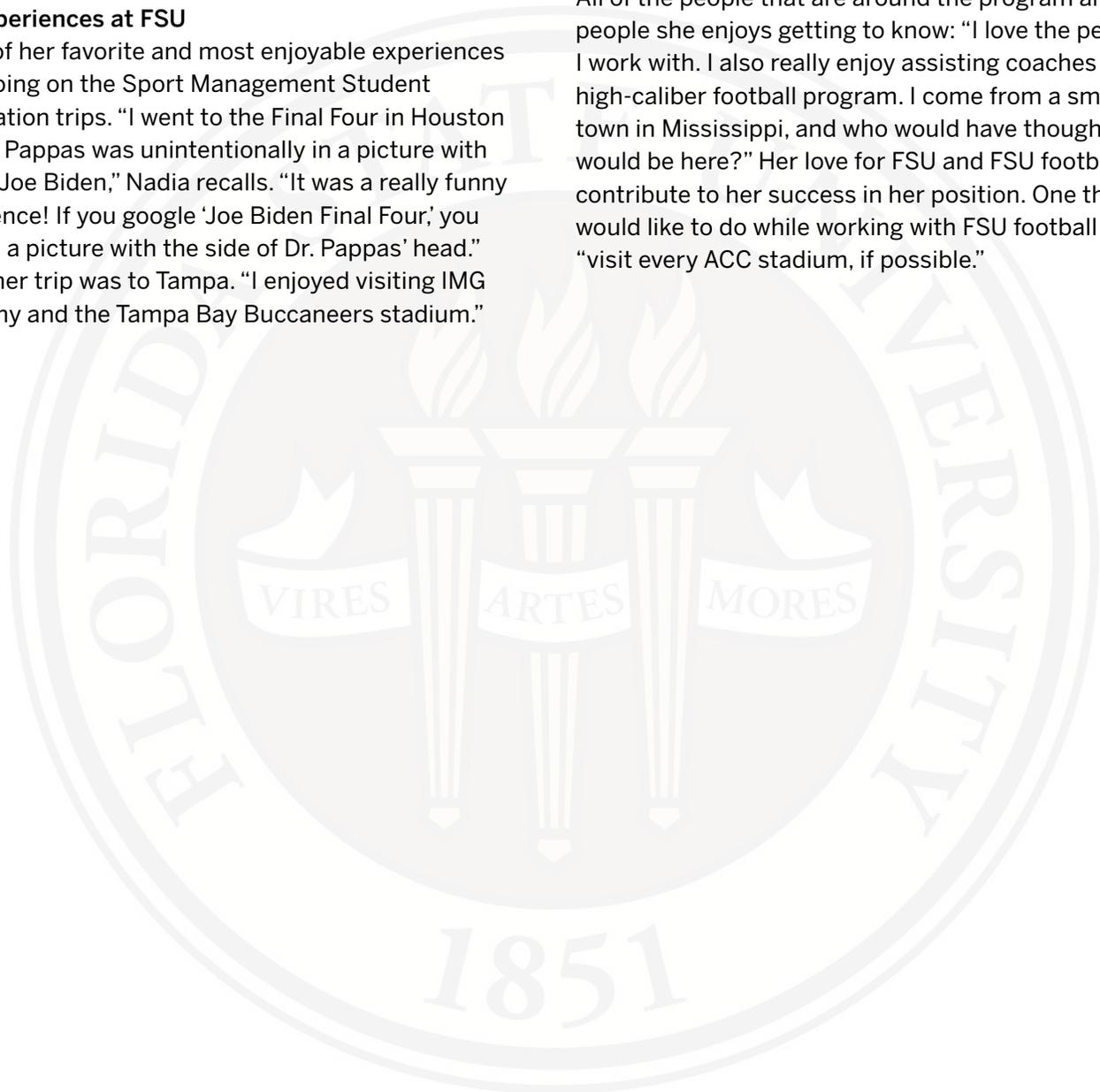
with whatever I can.” Her internships and the SMSA trips provided great networking experiences with other students and people in the sport industry. “I really enjoyed meeting new people and networking and building relationships with people. I enjoyed helping when I could, even if they couldn’t help me.”

Fun experiences at FSU

Some of her favorite and most enjoyable experiences were going on the Sport Management Student Association trips. “I went to the Final Four in Houston and Dr. Pappas was unintentionally in a picture with the VP Joe Biden,” Nadia recalls. “It was a really funny experience! If you google ‘Joe Biden Final Four,’ you will see a picture with the side of Dr. Pappas’ head.” The other trip was to Tampa. “I enjoyed visiting IMG academy and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers stadium.”

Current responsibilities and future aspirations

In her current role as the defensive administrative assistant for FSU Football, she really enjoys “meeting new people and connecting with new people. I really enjoy connecting and building relationships that develop over time and cultivating those relationships.” All of the people that are around the program are people she enjoys getting to know: “I love the people I work with. I also really enjoy assisting coaches at a high-caliber football program. I come from a small town in Mississippi, and who would have thought I would be here?” Her love for FSU and FSU football help contribute to her success in her position. One thing she would like to do while working with FSU football is to “visit every ACC stadium, if possible.”



Alumni Spotlight: Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Horner

Deputy Department Head of Physical Education

By David M. Lamb

A native of Winter Springs, Florida, Lt. Col. Matthew Horner graduated from Florida State University with a doctorate in sport management in December 2016. While being advised by Dr. Joshua Newman, Horner conducted research on critical organizational studies and the political economy of sport. Horner currently lives in Colorado with his wife and two boys, where he is the Deputy Department Head of Physical Education at the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA).

He attended the USAFA from 1999 to 2002 and received his bachelor's degree in economics. As a cadet, he was an outstanding Division I swimmer. He was a USAFA Letter Winner and Academic All-Conference each year from 1999 to 2002, and received the Mountain West Conference Senior Recognition Award in 2002. He also attended the 2000 Olympic Trials for the 200-meter backstroke and currently holds a Top-10 USAFA record for the same event. After graduation, he became a pilot of a Boeing C-17 Globemaster III and obtained his master's degree in administration from the American Military University.

As a Floridian, Horner always thought highly of FSU, where his twin sister also obtained her bachelor's degree. He chose FSU because it has a great reputation for being military/veteran friendly, which was important to him as he attended FSU while on active duty. He was originally interested in a degree in physical education, but he learned about the sport management program that was at the time a top five program in the United States. Horner discovered that the sport management program was well-rounded and better suited him because it "educated students in sport theory, business administration, and sport for the benefit of society."



In the sport management doctoral program at FSU, Horner learned how to be a great researcher; however, he also learned practical lessons that he uses every day. FSU prepared him for success in ways he didn't expect, and he is "very appreciative of Dr. Newman for [his] expertise, patience, and encouragement." His experience at FSU taught him to "think through and articulate complex institutional issues, provide truthful and thoughtful feedback to senior leaders and empower others by valuing their unique perspectives... all of which has helped move the Academy forward."

Horner was an executive member of the FSU Center for Sport, Health, & Equitable Development (SHED), serving as the lead of Academics & Strategy. During his time with SHED, he volunteered at the Kearney Center, a Tallahassee-based homeless resource center, and helped fundraise for its basketball court. His drive to add value to the community has been consistent, as he is now a board member of his local YMCA.

Currently, Horner is the Deputy Department Head of Physical Education at the USAFA, where he is a key contributor to the education of over 4,200 cadets; cadets are required to partake in an athletic competition each semester and take 10 physical education classes over the course of their tenure at the USAFA. He also oversees the intercollegiate boxing program, campus recreation programs, cadet fitness testing, and helps cadets maintain U.S. Air Force and cadet fitness standards.

Horner is excited to be working on the USAFA's Core Curriculum—an outcome-based approach to general education that all cadets, regardless of academic major, are required to complete. Horner is a member of the USAFA Outcome Strategy Team, which assesses the proficiencies of the nine institutional outcomes.

As Lt. Col. Horner looks toward the future, he is open to where his career takes him. His current role is preparing him to eventually take the reins as the Head of the Department of Physical Education or return to active-duty as an operational squadron commander.

Alumni Spotlight: Amy Sargeant

By Luis A. Gonzalez

FSU Sport Management graduate Amy Sargeant is currently the Assistant Coach of the Women's Tennis Team for the University of Oklahoma.

"What I love the most about being a Coach is giving back—giving back to the sport that has helped me grow up and has given me so much throughout my life," Amy says. "[I want to give] back to the young athletes who are looking to achieve their dreams on the tennis court, and thanks to my experience, I can guide the girls on our team here at the University of Oklahoma to be the best they can be on the tennis court."

The experiences Amy mentions are those from her time as an international student athlete at FSU. Coach Amy Sargeant is from Walsall, England, where she learned to play and love

the sport of tennis from a young age. Her passion for the sport led Amy to attend Florida State University for her undergrad studies in Sport Management and play for the FSU Women's Tennis team.

Being so far from home, the biggest challenge that Amy faced while pursuing her education was homesickness. The culture change was a big challenge, and being far away from her hometown and family took some time for adjustment. She also was not used to the style of training done at FSU. However, with help from her coaches and university resources, Amy was able to adjust to her new home.

During her time at FSU, Amy developed close bonds with her coaches. Reflecting on her experience as a student athlete at FSU, Amy says, "Coach Jennifer Hyde was a great mentor and welcomed me with open arms



as soon as I got to FSU, making me feel as if I was at home. She did everything she could to take care of me on and off the tennis court."

In the Sport Management program, Amy took a variety of classes, which she noted were valuable in her career as a tennis coach. She cites specific classes that helped her prepare for her coaching career: Sport Media with Dr. Michael Giardina, Strategic Management for Sport Organizations with Dr. Amy Kim, and Professional Development with Dr. Pappas.

Looking back at her time at FSU, Amy considers the college a home away from home. What Amy loves the most about FSU is the friendly and welcoming atmosphere that she associates with the athletics program and the sport management program. She particularly appreciates how everyone wanted to help her succeed. The support of staff, faculty and coaches helped her achieve a great start to her career.

Foundation for Diversity and Inclusion in Sport

By Ben Pereira

Nelson Mandela once said, “Sport has the power to change the world.” President Mandela made that statement following the end of apartheid and reunification of South Africa surrounding the country’s hosting of the Rugby World Cup. The current events in the United States surrounding government, sport and diversity have many similarities to that of South Africa in the late 1990s. Sport is the great unifier. It holds the unique ability to unite people regardless of social class, race, gender, sexuality, political affiliation, languages, etc. It is important as sport leaders to understand the value and the critical role sport plays in our society and in order for our industry to fully capitalize on it we need to address some of our own glaring issues.

In the Fall of 2017, I was an inaugural recipient of the President’s Council on Diversity and Inclusion’s Mini Grant program, where I received \$1,000 to start the Foundation for Diversity and Inclusion in Sport (FDIS). The industry of sport is still overridden with many regressive norms surrounding issues related to sexism, racism and heteronormativity. My goal for FDIS was to create a space/forum for students of all walks of life to connect and learn from acclaimed industry leaders who have combated issues related to sexism, racism and homophobia throughout their careers.

As a member of the LGBT community, I care deeply about this organization and the movement it supported. We have yet to see an openly gay athletic administrator serving in the highest role—general manager or team president—in any of the five major professional sports (MLB, MLS, NBA, NFL, and NHL), with the sole exception being Golden State Warrior’s President and COO, Rick Welts, who only recently came out as a gay man. In addition, we sorely lack administrative opportunities for women. In the Power Five (ACC, BIG10, BIG12, Pac-12 & SEC) NCAA schools, less than 10% of Athletic Directors are female, and it is not due to a lack of qualified applicants. For persons of color in sport, they are often type-casted into certain roles, mainly with athlete management or recruitment. In the NCAA, 87.5% of athletic directors are white, and



this year, Florida State became the only institution with a black AD, black head basketball coach and black head football coach.

We currently live in a consequential time in our society. With social movements like the #MeToo movement, the #BlackLivesMatter movement and the push for equal rights for the LGBTQ community, it’s important that the world’s greatest unifier—sport—plays a role in change.

The Foundation for Diversity and Inclusion in Sport (FDIS) is comprised of a group of students who see both the ethical and fiscal responsibility inherent in a diverse organization, and we are impassioned to enact change. It is a place where all students can feel welcome, where all students can feel comfortable to bring their full selves and not feel the need or pressure to leave a piece of their identity at the door.

As a sport management program, we serve as a pipeline to the industry. Our students will be the next great leaders of this industry. In fact, our alumna who spoke to FDIS earlier this semester, Dr. Carla Williams (Ph.D. '00), was named the Athletic Director at the University of Virginia in October and is the first African American woman to hold that job at a Power Five institution. It has been inspiring to watch my peers in my program and my academic colleagues support this organization. I’m excited to watch this organization grow over the next few years as it fully cements its place as a part of this storied sport management program. We will be the leaders for change, and our program will serve as the face for diversity and inclusion in sport academia. I couldn’t be prouder.

Dennis Nobles: The Coach, The Instructor, The Advisor

By Mel Dammel

131 Conference Championships. 130 All-Americans. 15 National Champions. Seven Olympians. These numbers represent only a handful of the athletes that Dennis Nobles has coached over his 30-plus-year career. In addition to coaching, he has taught and advised hundreds of students. After spending only 30 minutes talking to him about everything from the joys of having grandchildren to the movie *City Slickers*, it was clear that he has achieved his level of success because of his experience and expertise in his field, dedication to his craft and his holistic approach to coaching.

As a child of a Navy soldier, Dennis spent his childhood in many places, his favorite being Puerto Rico. The Caribbean climate allowed him to play his then favorite sport all year long, baseball. He bonded with his father over their love of the Atlanta Braves, a team Dennis has followed since their relocation to the city. His baseball background still comes in handy when wearing his hat as Mr. Nobles, the instructor and advisor.

After obtaining both his bachelor's and master's degree from FSU, Dennis returned to his alma mater and now serves as the undergraduate advisor for the FSU Department of Sport Management. He is the go-to for the approximately 300 undergraduates in the program, helping them make decisions on what classes to take while guiding them through the many processes required to obtain a degree. In addition to advising, Nobles has taught physical education conditioning, theory and measurement courses and last year he added sport management classes to his list.

Outside of the classroom, his experience and

expertise in sport has positioned him as a valuable asset to FSU Athletics. July marks one year since he announced his retirement from FSU Track & Field, but do not be surprised if you find him on the track. He still dedicates his time as a volunteer coach with the team and supports the athletes at events, as he did recently in Coral Gables, FL at the ACC Outdoor Track & Field Championship.

"There are so many facets to [coaching]," Nobles says. He explained the complexity of coaching as both art and science. The science of coaching requires that the coach be an expert in their field. They need to know the technicalities, rules and mechanics of their sport. He is also supportive of coaches continuing their education and joining associations within their field. He said that he uses the knowledge gained while pursuing his degree in exercise physiology on a daily basis. He also stressed the importance of continuing education and membership in industry associations to stay informed of the newest trends and to make connections within the field.



Participating in the sport as an athlete is valuable experience that someone can apply to coaching, but he does not think it is vital to being a good coach. He shared experiences of coaches who were not so good athletes and athletes who were not so good coaches. He believes that just like a person is trained to be an athlete, so too can they be trained to be a coach. The success of the athletes he has coached—being named the Women's National Track & Field Assistant Coach of the Year (2003) by USA Track & Field and his induction into the 2012 State of Florida Track and Field Hall of Fame—all speak to Noble's understanding of the science and expertise in his field.

The art of coaching is present in his interactions and development of relationships with people. As a coach, he spent a minimum of 20 hours training

with his group of athletes, in addition to multiple, consecutive 12-hour days at meets and long trips traveling to get there. Throughout these interactions, he learned not only the physical capabilities of his athletes but also about their personalities. Nobles described it as being “a counselor, a psychologist, a physiologist and a bio-mechanic all at once. Being a coach is a service profession. You are serving other people.” A good coach like Nobles knows their athletes on the field, off the field and in the classroom.

A simple Google search reveals countless stories of Nobles going above and beyond what most would define as a coach’s responsibility. A former pole vaulter of Nobles’ dedicated a blog entry to him titled “Best Coach Ever.” The athlete writes about a memory they have of Nobles efforts to get their equipment to a national meet in one piece despite unfavorable weather conditions. Nobles has a broader understanding of what it means to be a coach, and this is why so many of the athletes he has interacted with have stayed in touch with him years later.

Though he admits it can be difficult to maintain a balance between academics and athletics, he sees many parallels between the two, finding that many of his skills are applicable both areas: “I think they are

very complementary. I think that teaching helps me be a better coach and coaching has helped me with teaching.” He uses the same strategy when advising as he does with coaching. He says that advising requires him to map out a unique and specific path for each student’s goal just as coaching requires him to make a unique and specific program for each athlete’s goal. He describes both relationships as one that requires a lot of patience and requires you to work together to devise a plan towards a common goal.

Whether you are planning to continue onto graduate school or to join the work force, Dennis has some advice for you. To those considering graduate school, Nobles says to do it now before life gets in the way of preventing you from doing it in the future. He stresses that even if you are considering coaching as a career, the more knowledge you can gain about your sport, the higher your chances of success will be. His advice to those who are looking to break into the industry is to find a place that will provide opportunities for development and advancement, but most importantly to find a place that you can contribute to. Whether you know him as Dennis, Mr. Nobles or Coach Nobles, there is no question as to the contributions he has made and continues to make to both FSU academics and athletics.

“I don’t know that there’s ever been anyone better.”

-FSU Track & Field Coach Bob Braman (Thomas, 2012)

“I really appreciate the time he takes to train me, to invest in my dream.”

-Ngoni Makusha, Olympian, 2011 Bowerman Award Recipient, FSU Athlete (Seminole Productions, 2014)

“...he is no longer just my coach, but a legend.”

-Anonymous FSU Athlete (polevaultpower.com, 2006)

SMSA Ohio

By Kelly Hagen

Florida State's Sport Management Student Association (SMSA) has made it a staple offering of their club to bring select students on a networking trip every semester. This spring, 44 students along with Dr. Pappas embarked on a trip to Ohio where they met with front office members of various teams and schools in Cincinnati and Columbus. To top it off, the group was not only able to volunteer at two events surrounding the NCAA Women's Basketball Final Four, but to attend the games themselves.

To start off the six-day trip, the students boarded a bus at Tully Gymnasium and departed on a 13-hour journey that finally ended in Cincinnati. The next day started with a panel discussion with a few members of the Cincinnati Bengal staff followed by a stadium tour. We learned that their small front office staff really has a family-like connection thanks to their ownership.

Later that day, it was originally planned that the group would be attending the Cincinnati Red's Opening Day; unfortunately, the game was canceled due to inclement weather. Thanks to the quick thinking and connections of SMSA's executive board, the group was able to get a peek inside the stadium and meet with a few members of their front office instead. Following the meeting with the Reds, the students went to a meeting at the University of Cincinnati, where they learned about their football department and a few of their offerings for student athletes. Then it was back on the bus to head to Columbus.

The next morning the group started their day by going to Ohio State University, where they met with both employees of Ohio State University and the Columbus Blue Jackets. There was a lot to take in from these staffers. Complete with a Q&A, the students learned helpful tips to further their careers in sport.

From there the students had their first volunteer shift at Tourney Town, a takeover of the Greater Columbus Convention Center by the NCAA Final Four that included youth clinics, autograph signings, Q&As and even a fashion show. Following their shift, the group got to attend the semi-final games at Nationwide

Arena. They watched two amazing basketball games, both ending with buzzer-beater baskets to send the games into overtime.

After an exciting night of basketball, the students woke up the next morning to work their final volunteer shift. The students helped facilitate The Bounce, an event where kids age 18 and under received basketballs to dribble from downtown all the way to Tourney Town. The day wasn't just work, though; students had the rest of the day to decompress. One group went to Ohio State to watch them take on Penn State in NCAA Men's Lacrosse, while another group took to the Columbus Crew game to see them head up against the Vancouver Whitecaps. This downtime helped the students get to know each other in a more social setting and form even longer lasting bonds.

On Easter Sunday, the group went back downtown to watch the championship game of the Women's Final Four. In another exciting game, Norte Dame beat Mississippi State in a buzzer beater to clench the national title. That night Ohio received a spring time snow. In an early departure the next morning, the fresh, untouched snow was a chilly cherry on top of a great trip.

The executive board of SMSA has always done a fantastic job planning and executing these networking trips, and the trip to Ohio was no exception. The trip was packed with information to help the students in their future careers, networking, volunteering and a ton of exciting basketball. I know that the returning student will be excited to hear what the next trip is going to be in the fall!

