



# CAREERS IN SPORTS

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# OVERVIEW

## Career Options in Sports

For many people, sports are an area of life that is attached to great memories. Scoring the winning goal in the championship, making the big save on a breakaway or just hanging out with the team conjures up memories of friendship, competition and personal achievements. These experiences illustrate the benefit of *teamwork, perseverance and respect* and are often a key reason why sports enthusiasts are interested in pursuing a career in the sports industry. Although the majority of these careers are not on the playing field, *these core values are built into the many careers that help bring professional sports to life* and play an important part in ensuring success in this industry.

The sports industry is *the fusing of business (often big business) and entertainment*. An amazingly high level of job satisfaction can be found in sports related careers, from the sports equipment salesperson selling bats and bowling balls to the agent insuring players and playing fields. For the sports enthusiast, their passion and interest in the sport makes them want to be involved at some level. The profession is also characterized by long hours of hard work and dedication. Outsiders often only see the glamour of sports careers but don't always consider that sports related careers may require one to work long and odd hours as well as miss personal commitments.

The sports industry continually requires an increasingly diverse group of professionals to successfully fill the *wide range of jobs* available. These careers are interdependent on one another for success and this emphasizes the teamwork that is necessary. For example, the successful football coach relies upon the ground crew, the sports information publicist, the statistician, the athletic trainer and others. The successful general manager relies upon the director of concessions, the marketing/sales manager, the sportswriters, the radio broadcaster and the team manager.

A common route to obtaining a position in the sports industry involves *integrating an existing skill or specialty with sports*. A lawyer could refocus toward becoming a sports agent. A nurse may take additional course work in athletic training to enter the profession. A computer specialist may wish to assist in the operation of the centerfield scoreboard or team website. A writer might cover a local sports team. An accountant might serve as a business manager for a college athletic department. The possibilities are limited only by one's imagination!

Although there are many different routes to obtaining a position in the sports industry *one ingredient*

*remains critical: interpersonal skills.* Sports are a people business. You must be able to work with people, often under stress – losing streaks, deadlines, negotiations, game injuries and budget inadequacies!

## **SPORTS CAREERS FOR GRADUATES**

Below is a list of potential career options for students interested in working in the sports industry. The list is categorized into various career areas, each of which contribute to the many functions that are required to produce professional and amateur sports in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Before you begin to consider the possible career options listed below, take a moment to identify your skills, qualities, interests, experiences and values. Once you know the factors that are very important to you in your career, you can better determine which sports related careers would be the best fit. Remember, a successful career is not always based on monetary status but is rather a combination of all these elements. If you need assistance in identifying these factors or understanding how they could combine into potential career options, please book an appointment to see a Career Counsellor.

**Reminder:** If an occupation piques your interest, feel free to browse through the Career Centre library to learn more about the specific occupation. Also, occupations marked with an asterisk (\*) have career profiles which can be viewed using Career Cruising.

UTM students can access Career Cruising by logging into [CLNx](#) and checking under the 'Resources' tab (please ask us if you need help with this!)

### **Professional Athletes**

- Professional Athlete\*
- Race Car Driver\*
- Sports Broadcaster (TV and Radio)
- Sports Broadcast Producer
- Sports Broadcast Video Editor

### **Coaching Careers**

- Coach\* (profession, college, school, volunteer)
- Diving/Swimming Instructor\*
- Marital Arts Instructor

### **Physical Education**

- Fitness Instructor\*
- Personal Trainer\*
- Sports Instructor\*
- Physical Education Teacher\*

### **Sports Management/Administration**

- School Athletic Director
- Community Recreational Director\*
- Sports Facility Maintenance Personnel

### **Sports Medicine**

- Athletic Therapist\*
- Kinesiologist\*
- Sports Physician
- Orthopedist
- Osteopath

### **Sports Journalism**

- Newspaper Sports Writing

- Chiropractor
- Physical Therapist
- Prosthetist
- Sports Nutritionist

- Sports Equipment Sales and Development
- Sports Photographers
- Sports Agent/Representative
- Stadium and Arena Concessionaries
- Sports Statisticians
- Scout
- Sports Academicians
- Sports Cartoonist
- Sports Equipment Manager
- Sports Official\*
- Sports Museum Curator

### **Public Relations, Marketing, and Sales**

- Sports Marketer\*
- Sports Public Relations Specialist
- Manager, Sporting Goods Store

### **Additional Careers**

- Sport Psychology Consultant\*

### **Sample Professional Team Positions**

- General Manager
- Office Manager/Executive Secretary
- Field Maintenance Director
- Director of Stadium Operation
- Director of Ticket Operations
- Home/Visiting Club House Manager
- Official Scorer
- Public Address Announcer
- Website Designer

## **WHO EMPLOYS IN THE SPORTS INDUSTRY?**

There are a variety of organizations that offer sports related careers in North America, with varying levels of sport specific knowledge required for success. Furthermore, many organizations may have operations that require specialized skills from areas of study such as business, science, law and media.

Below is a list of the types of organizations that employ people in the sports industry. Research these types of organizations to understand their organizational structures, activities, products and services, future plans and their market size! This information will help you understand their needs as an employer and the types of positions they may have to offer. You can then link this information back to your experiences and skills to understand which positions would best suit your background or to determine what experience you need to gain to obtain the positions you want.

- **Professional Teams** (eg. Toronto Argonauts)
- **Professional Sports Leagues** (eg. NHL)
- **Amateur Teams** (eg. Mississauga Majors - OHL)

- **Amateur Sports Leagues** (eg. Dixie Soccer League)
- **Community Sports Programs** (eg. City of Mississauga)
- **Sports Apparel Organizations** (eg. - Puma)
- **Sports Equipment Organizations** (eg. - CCM)
- **Sports Not for Profit Committees** (eg. - Special Olympics Canada)
- **Sports Health/Rehabilitation Organizations** (eg. - The Sports Clinic)
- **Print/Electronic/Television Media Organizations** (eg. The Score)
- **Universities/Educational Institutions** (eg. University of Toronto Varsity Blues)
- **Sports Communications Companies** (eg. SDI Marketing)
- **Sports Law/Athlete Management Firms** (eg. Newport Sports Management)
- **Fitness Centers** (eg. Goodlife Fitness)
- **Sports Training/Development Schools** (eg. John Elkin's Hockey Goalie School)
- **Sports Retail Companies** (eg. Sporting Life)
- **Sports Research Laboratories** (eg. Gatorade Sports Science Institute)
- **Sports Museums and Historical Sites** (eg. Hockey Hall of Fame)

## **FURTHER EDUCATION OPTIONS**

From the above information regarding potential careers and employers, one can understand that many of the occupations require a higher level of education than an undergraduate degree. The sports industry is so large and requires so many diverse competencies (business, health related, communications etc.) that a comprehensive list of further education options would be nearly impossible to create. To assist you in the educational research process, below is a sample list of further education options in Ontario that are specifically tailored towards sports related careers.

Having a specific career or area in mind makes the process of researching and evaluating further educational options easier. Bear in mind that some occupations will also require specific skills which may be just as or more important than education, so take the time to research specific careers or areas to obtain a detailed understanding of what you're hoping to achieve and what the important educational elements are will lead to future success!

### **Examples of Graduate Programs/Post Graduate Diplomas and Certificates**

- **Sports Business Management**, Algonquin College
- **Sports Journalism**, Centennial College
- **Sports Business Management**, Durham College
- **Sport and Event Marketing**, Fanshawe College
- **Nutrition for Sport and Performance**, Niagara College
- **Exercise Science and Lifestyle Management**, Humber College
- **Biophysical Sciences of Sport, Physical Activity and Health**, University of Ottawa
- **Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity**, Queen's University
- **Sport Psychology**, Laurentian University of Sudbury

- **Cultural Studies of Sport and Exercise**, University of Western Ontario
- **Exercise Sciences**, University of Toronto
- **Nutrition, Exercise, and Metabolism**, University of Guelph

## WORDS OF WISDOM

### A Path to Professional Sports Jobs

By Brian Clapp, [WorkInSports.com](http://WorkInSports.com) (December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014)

There is never a straight line to success in the sports industry, there are steps forward, sideways and even, at times, backwards. But through it all, when you have an established goal that you can cling to, a desire that isn't easily pushed around, you can find your way through thick and thin.

Traci Campbell had a clear goal after getting her Masters from Oral Roberts University, she wanted to pursue a job in sports media. Quickly, she learned the name of the game.

"Versatility is key! Whether working at CBS Radio or with the Dallas Cowboys, I jump at any opportunity that comes my way," says the former Division 1 athlete. "No job can ever be too small, the more you can learn the better an asset you become. I am constantly asking if I can observe another person's job so I better understand what it is they do. I want to be the most valuable employee to my team.

"To work in sports and media you have to be willing to commit the time. It is never a 9 to 5 job. Always be the first person to step up and volunteer."

Just a few years removed from her Masters, Campbell has wisdom for the sports industry far surpassing her years of experience. Her perspective is refreshing, instead of blaming struggles on others or the unfairness of the world, she perseveres and continues learning along the way. Maybe that attitude is why America's Team now signs her checks.

Read on, it will be worth it.

*You received your undergrad degree from the University of Tulsa and then received your Masters at Oral Roberts - why did you think it was an important step to get your Masters and looking back, was it worth it?*

**Campbell:** Furthering myself in school was a personal goal, but also a conscious career decision. The sports industry is a tough business and the more experience and dedication you can show, the more valuable you will be to a team.

My Masters has helped me get in the door to smaller teams. They see the dedication to education as a valuable asset. They want to know a potential team member can be dedicated and by furthering yourself in school it shows extra dedication and commitment to further yourself and your future.

I believe my Masters was worth it. No matter where I go in my career I will always have a small competitive edge because I took the extra time to better myself collegiately.

Getting your Masters is not for everyone, but it was the right decision for me.

*Your Masters is in Management Studies and Communication – when you enrolled did you have a specific career path in mind, or were you still in the process of figuring things out?*

**Campbell:** I did have a specific career in mind which was directed more to media and public relations. It was not until I moved to Dallas, that I discovered my excitement to dedicate my skills to sports communications and media. Coming from Oklahoma, we did not have professional sports teams at that time so professional sports jobs were not my primary focus.

I played sports growing up and was a Division I Collegiate Athlete in college, but when arriving in Dallas I discovered all the possible career opportunities within the sports arena. This showed me I could have it all. My career of working with the media and doing it with a professional sports team.

*You had a 4 month stint as Director of Communications with the Allen Wranglers indoor football league – while you were there Terrell Owens was released from the team in a story that became national quickly – what was that experience like? Was it a tough introduction to what professional sports jobs are like, or was it exciting?*

**Campbell:** The Allen Wranglers gave me a taste of what it would be like to work in the sports industry.

**Traci Campbell was the Director of Communication for the Allen Wranglers when Terrell Owens was on, and then released from, the team. Talk about trial by fire.**

Getting your feet wet with a smaller professional sports team is a great way to learn how to navigate the industry and gain the experience teams like the Dallas Cowboys require. One season under your belt can truly teach you a lot. Smaller teams have to work to compete with large professional teams.

As the Director of Communications for the Allen Wranglers I had to find inventive ways to get the media to attend games and show them the value of what my team had to offer. In essence, why is my team news worthy.

Bringing in a former NFL player like Terrell Owens made the Allen Wranglers valuable sports news. I joined the team for the perfect season to gain experience of what a large professional team would be like. A player like Terrell Owens brought in crowds and new fans to the team. It also brought attention



from ESPN and other major sports networks which gave me the opportunity to communicate with them.

We released Terrell Owens with just a few games left in our season.

This again gained huge national media attention and was a headlining story on every major sports network. It was the first time I had to say “no comment” to the media. Working with the Allen Wranglers gave me a taste of what the ups and downs can be like working for larger teams. It prepared me for the national stage in sports.

The difference between working for a small local team and a team like the Dallas Cowboys was night and day, but I would not have been as prepared without the valuable experience that the Allen Wranglers were able to teach me.

At the end of our season our team closed, but I am grateful for the experience I gained. You have to work very hard at that level, which makes you appreciate such things as an established fan base and already established media attention.

*From there you began working at CBS radio in promotions, give us a run down of what your role consisted of?*

**Campbell:** Even with experience in the sports industry it is still hard to gain professional sports jobs.

My background was still media and CBS Radio has 6 stations in Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) as well as 105.3 The Fan who is the official station of the Dallas Cowboys and the Texas Rangers. Working as a Promotions Assistant is another foot in the door to working in the media and with sports teams.

Many of my colleagues at CBS Radio work with the major sports teams in DFW. Working in radio gives you the opportunity to work in several markets such as professional sports and television.

As a Promotions Assistant you are on the front lines of the station. You meet lots of people and get the opportunity to work with all 6 stations. This helps well round you in the media.

*You've grown in your role at CBS radio, now you are in programming and voice-overs - why do you think you have found success?*

**Campbell:** I am still working on success.

**Working in sports radio has helped Traci Campbell improve her skill set towards reaching her ultimate goal**

Radio is constantly changing and you have to be flexible and work in any and all departments. I still work as a Promotions Assistant as well as programming and voice-overs as much as possible.

I have developed by making myself a jack of all trades with the station. It's not enough to only know your job, you must know the jobs of your colleagues as well. This makes you the most rounded and valuable asset to your company.

*Breaking into the sports industry is hard, what was the most important thing you did to help launch your career?*

**Campbell:** Make contact with everyone. I cannot tell you how many resumes I have sent to teams even when they are not hiring. Let them know you are out there.

A lot of times teams hire from within, so another great way is to do an internship while you are still in college. Internships are key, they help build a Rolodex of people you know which will ultimately help get you a job out of college.

If you are already out of college, then start emailing and calling. Be persistent, but not annoying. Make it a point to check in with them quarterly or send them updates when you have a major change to your resume.

*Recently you started doing work with the Dallas Cowboys as an Event Presentation Assistant - how did this opportunity come up? I imagine hiring for this role was competitive, I mean, it's the Dallas Cowboys, why do you think you were hired?*

**Campbell:** Getting an opportunity to work for major sports teams is predominantly about who you know. I had a chance encounter with a high ranking member of the Dallas Cowboys and at the end of our conversation he said let's get together and discuss further. He handed me a card and said shoot me an email, so the same day I did. The ball was in my court and I did not waste time. We met the following week.

He brought me in to interview with three members of the Dallas Cowboys staff. I presented myself as what I can do for the team and they liked me from there. I was told here is your foot in the door, now make the most of it and each day I work hard to be the greatest asset I can be to the team.

It is important not to think about yourself and what the team can do for you, but how your experience and knowledge can benefit the team. That's why there's no "I" in team. Each member of the Dallas Cowboys staff plays a vital role that all leads to a successful game day.

*Take us through Game Day - what is your role as an Event Presentation Assistant?*

**Campbell:** My role on a game day changes from what my task can be when we are not in season. During the season, I assist in running a 90 person promotions and flag team. We are in charge of game entertainment and fan interaction.

## **As an event presentation assistant, one of Campbell's job requirements is to assist in running a 90 person promotions and flag team**

Most of our work is during pre-game and television time-outs. We make the fans feel more like family members, than just another ticket holder and to us our fans are family. The beautiful ladies on our promotions team, and I do mean beautiful, interact with the fans and assist with contests that you see on our jumbo-tron.

The flag team has an amazing job, they run the players onto the field and overall make the environment of the game exciting. During the game the guys are spread throughout the end zones and are there to pump up the crowd.

*What's next for you, what is the ultimate goal and how will you get there?*

**Campbell:** I plan on continuing to grow my experience within the professional sports world in Dallas.

We have some of the most high profile teams in the country and there's not a better city to work in when it comes to sports. I hope to grow within the Dallas Cowboys and take on more responsibility. The only way to get where I want to go is through hard work, persistence and networking even within my own team.

The Dallas Cowboys is a large organization and it is vital to know everyone you can. We are having a tremendous season in 2014 and will continue to be America's Team and hold that title with pride. All I can say at the end is work hard, do not give up and Go Cowboys!

## **Sample Starting Jobs in Pro Sports**

### **Group Ticket Sales Rep**

This job entails hitting the telephone to drum up sales for large groups. Top performers often make \$100,000 or more annually by age 30, often moving into corporate sponsorship sales. Organizations want to see some type of sales experience in a résumé, even if it's a part-time position in a retail store.

### **Customer Service Rep**

Many sports teams offer entry-level spots geared to helping to organize events, like special days at the stadium or off-site gatherings for sponsors. Showing you can get a band on the field at the right time or set up a hospitality tent at a nearby park demonstrates organizational skills that senior management values.

### **Public Relations Assistant**

Entry-level PR work means helping to write press releases and organizing media guides. Openings can be had with both teams and league offices. First step: Run to your college's sports information department and volunteer for those duties. That experience is the first thing a hiring manager wants to see.

### **Client Service Assistant (Outside Agencies)**

Outside sports agencies like IMG hire entry-level people to service corporate customers and help plan events. They'll want a candidate who is organized and shows an interest in sports.

### **eMarketing/Database Management**

A lot of grunt work here, such as inputting data from suite guests' business cards to track who's coming to the game. But do a good job, and you could find yourself selling suites before long. And a good sales track record there can be a fast track to management.

### **Graduate Assistant - Sports Information Department**

As with players, the college level can be a good springboard to the pros. Writing press releases and helping to put together media notes can lead to suite and sponsorship sales.

### **University/ College Development Rep**

Starting outside the sports arena, colleges often have openings for recent grads in alumni fundraising. Many move on to athletic fundraising, a potentially visible role on the way to the athletic director's chair.

### **Account Associate (Outside Marketing Agency)**

Some sports marketing consultants have entry-level spots that entail media tracking and monitoring, i.e. keeping and analyzing spreadsheet records of clients' media coverage. Logistics planning for vendors can also be part of the job.

### **Marketing Analyst (Outside Marketing Firm)**

College grads with strong analytical skills are put to work reviewing sports sponsorships, helping advertisers determine whether they're getting sufficient bang for their buck. The job includes measuring market research results used to determine how well a sponsorship is helping a brand resonate with the public.

### **Researcher (Television)**

Want to get into the media side of sports? Networks selectively hire researchers for events like the Olympics to interview athletes and coaches, write bios and compile statistics for on-camera hosts.

## **HOW TO GET EXPERIENCE**

A great way to learn more about the sports industry and build a network of contacts is to start early and seek relevant summer, part-time and volunteer opportunities. Remember that relevant work can come in a variety of industries and to keep your focus on opportunities that build the relevant skills that recruiters will seek! Don't discount jobs like working at a hockey school, golf course, life guarding, indoor sport facility and retail sport jobs to gain transferable skills that are helpful in your work search, as well as experience working in the sports environment.

### **Web Links and Resources**

Check out our web links below to get connected with resources that can help you get some valuable experience.

#### **Cosmos Sports & Entertainment**

<https://www.cosmosports.com/careers/>

Cosmos Sports is a Canadian firm that covers a variety of sports, specifically geared towards matching individuals with a passion for a career in sports, with companies within the industry seeking qualified employees.

#### **The Sport Information Resource Centre**

<https://sirc.ca/>

SIRC is Canada's sport information resource centre which retrieves, disseminates and communicates Canadian sport research to sporting communities around the world. Visit their job board to see many student opportunities in Canadian sports organizations!

#### **Workinsports.com**

WorkInSports.com is an American all sports-based website with a comprehensive listing of jobs and internships in the sports industry.

#### **Sportbusiness.com**

Learn more about the business side of sports with this internationally recognized website. The site includes a job board with many international opportunities.

**\*Reminder:** Most professional, semi-professional and amateur sports leagues have an official job posting board on their website that includes an internship section for students. For example, check

out the National Hockey League's official job posting website at <https://www.teamworkonline.com/hockey-jobs/hockeyjobs/nhl-league-office>. Also, don't forget about every league's teams. Most teams hire interns through their website's job posting board!