Todd Fischer has managed national sport marketing campaigns for brand heavyweights like State Farm Insurance and MillerCoors. Liz Sattler has worked in the marketing department for the NHL’s St. Louis Blues. Tracie Henry has executed state championships for the Illinois High School Association. This past school year, the trio shared their remarkable sport industry experiences with sport management students, serving as adjunct professors in ISU’s graduate program, giving students a unique first-person perspective into working within the sport industry.

The need for the trio came about when long-time ISU Sport Management Program Director Chad McEvoy took a position at Syracuse in the spring of 2012. In his absence, Drs. Nels Popp and Brent Beggs reached out to Fischer, Sattler, and Henry to inquire whether they would have any interest in temporarily teaching in the program this past school year. All three quickly agreed.

“The ISU sport management program led me to my current position at the IHSA,” explained Henry. “I wanted to give back to the program and this teaching opportunity was a way of staying connected to the sport management program, students and university.”

Henry, who completed her graduate degree in 2008 and is currently an Assistant Executive Director at the IHSA, taught the Facility and Event Management in Sport and Recreation course. Fischer, who is the Manager of Marketing Communications at State Farm, led the Advanced Topics in Sport Management class. This past spring, Sattler, who graduated from the ISU sport management program in 2010 and is currently the Event Coordinator at Quail Meadows Golf Course, taught the program’s Principles of Sport Law course.

All three were able to bring outstanding practical experience to the classroom, delivering content not available in textbooks, as Fischer explained.

“Leading sports and entertainment marketing, advertising and integrated marketing at State Farm during my ‘day job’ and teaching at ISU in the evenings made for real-time application of concepts in the classroom,” he said. “During our industry sector discussions, I could speak to negotiation principles or the integrated marketing campaign process I used that day in working on high-profile marketing deals that students would otherwise only read about in SportsBusiness Journal or see on television.”

In one class, Henry had her students examine the bid process of selecting sites for championship events, an activity with which she was very familiar as she had just gone through the real-life experience.
Notes from the program director

Dear ISU Sport Management Alumni, Students, and Friends,

Thank you for taking the time to check out the Illinois State Sport Management Program newsletter.

We saw a significant change this year as previous director Chad McEvoy started his new position at Syracuse, leaving the program in my hands. Running the program continues to be a learning process for me, but I am very fortunate to have some great help from folks like Drs. Brent Beggs and Amy Hurd in the Recreation and Parks Administration program and our fantastic adjunct professors featured in our cover story. Todd, Liz, and Tracie bring great experience to our program and provide outstanding mentorship for students.

One of our initiatives this year was to ask for feedback from alums and current students regarding our program. Over 57% of current students and alums who were sent the survey link responded, which demonstrates the high level of interest graduates have in the program. This survey was part of a research collaboration between several schools and analysis is still taking place. However, a quick scan of the data provided some very encouraging results regarding ISU. For instance, on a 6-point scale, ISU respondents gave a satisfaction rating of 5.15 for the program overall, a 5.66 rating for discussions of current topics and events, a 5.26 rating on opportunities for hands-on projects, and a 5.08 rating for opportunities to network with industry professionals. All these ratings far exceeded the mean in the study, which is a great sign. We hope to publish the complete results soon.

Another sign of our program's growth was the effort put forth by students to gain experience at outside events this past school year and summer. Here is a short list of some of the events current ISU sport management students volunteered or paid their own way for in the past 12 months: MLB All-Star Fan Fest, National Association of Collegiate Marketing Administrators conference, Bellator MMA, John Deere Classic PGA tournament, Western & Southern Tennis Open, FCS Championship Game, and the Illinois High School Shrine Football Game. Those experiences came on top of students' regular work in graduate assistantship positions with ISU athletics, Illinois Wesleyan athletics, and the Bloomington Blaze hockey team.

Every year I am more amazed at what our students accomplish both in and out of the classroom. We are looking forward to another great year in 2013, starting with a pre-semester tailgate at the St. Louis Rams pre-season game against the Green Bay Packers. This fall we will also be conducting a search for a new sport management faculty member to join the team in 2014.

Thank you for following the ISU sport management program. Go Redbirds.

Nels

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continued from cover

experience of selecting a location and managing event planning for the IHSA's inaugural state dance finals. Sattler, meanwhile, had her class engage in a simulated collective bargaining agreement between major league baseball and the players association. Just a few months earlier her former employer, the Blues, were caught in the middle of a real life CBA negotiation that handcuffed the NHL for several months.

“I was really impressed with how engaged students were and how seriously they took the negotiations,” said Sattler. “I enjoyed watching them battle for their positions and I think, to their surprise, they enjoyed it too.”

Fischer, meanwhile, brought one of State Farm’s clients into the classroom.

“We had the students conduct a business analysis for the Chicago Bulls corporate sponsorship department,” explained Fischer. “Students examined business opportunities for the Bulls by dissecting a game through the aspects of the television broadcast, digital/online experience and social media presence. I brought in some industry specialists to help students break down each aspect and see the game differently as a business rather than a game. At the end of the project, the students’ recommendations were provided directly to the Director of Corporate Sponsorships at the Bulls for consideration.”

Besides teaching students critical elements of the sports business, the adjunct professors were also able to share insight regarding breaking into the industry.

“I was in their position just a few years ago, so I enjoyed watching them evolve and grow over the semester,” said Sattler. “I felt I could provide an interesting perspective to the students, with a background that spans professional sports to park district recreation.”

All three instructors shared their personal stories of how they broke into the business and the tips they have picked up along the way to advancing their careers.

While students gained some great perspectives and connections, the industry professionals were quick to point out they learned just as much from the classroom experience.

“Being around 13 young, hungry students looking to break into the sports industry and aspire to do what I have been fortunate enough to do in my career is a great reminder of how blessed we all are in this industry; to do what we do for a living,” reflected Fischer. “Seeing your experiences and situation through someone else’s eyes was a great way to get re-energized and find the original purpose for why I decided to work in sports marketing. I am very thankful for what I learned from the students and the passion they brought out in me.”

In fact, for Sattler, the experience provided her some personal career direction. This fall, she plans to leave her position at Quail Meadows and start working on her Ph.D. at Illinois State with hopes of teaching sport management as a full-time job in the near future. For Henry and Fischer, the biggest reward was seeing students find their own career direction.

“My favorite part of teaching in the program this past year was getting to know the students,” said Henry. “I loved hearing their career goals and plans and watching some of them land their first job or get the internship they had really worked hard for.”
1. How would you describe your job?

My main responsibility is to raise annual funds for our 750 student-athletes and 25 sport programs, primarily to cover the $9.4M scholarship bill we write back to the University each year. However, our total 2013 fiscal year annual giving goal is roughly $10.4M. In order to accomplish this, we send out an annual renewal and solicitation piece to current, past and prospective donors to Gopher Athletics. In addition, I meet with donors and prospective donors to tell the story of Gopher Athletics and discuss giving opportunities such as seat related gifts, capital projects, scholarship gifts and estate planning.

2. What are some of the unique opportunities you have had with your job?

Personally, as a development officer I’m a little unique in having spent four years in marketing at ISU. My goal is to one day oversee an external unit within college athletics; having a background in marketing is a huge asset. From a development standpoint, I’ve been fortunate to meet some extraordinary people. I’ve not only been able to share the stories of the institutions and student-athletes I’ve worked for, but learned the stories of our donors as well. Our donors come from all walks of life and choose to support college athletics for different reasons; however, they have a common theme in their passion for supporting their University.

Being a former student-athlete, selling the story of our current student-athletes is an easy one for me. I love the quote “love what you do, and you’ll never have to work another day in your life.” I truly feel that way about working in college athletics.

Lastly, working in college athletics has allowed me to be a part of some amazing experiences. Thinking back on some of the games and special events I’ve attended still gives me chills. I would say my most memorable thus far is from my time at Mizzou Athletics. We hosted No. 1 Oklahoma football on homecoming day with College Gameday on campus and beat the Sooners 36-27. That was a great day!

3. What is the toughest part of your job?

The toughest part of my job is the hours. Many people have a misconception that working in college athletics is glitz, glamour and golf courses. There have been many days where we arrive before 8 am and do not leave until after 11 pm when the game finishes. We work many nights and weekends. It’s difficult at times to find some down time.

4. What are some of your favorite memories from your time at Illinois State?

I grew up in Bloomington, IL. I’m very fond of the Redbirds. My parents both graduated from ISU. In fact, I started as a camper at Jill Hutchison’s basketball camp. I think I went every year growing up and then transitioned into a camp counselor in college. My parents held men’s basketball tickets; I remember many exciting games under Bob Bender, Kevin Stallings and Tom Richardson. It was only natural I would receive my master’s from Illinois State and my first job in college athletics at ISU.

My memories are filled with wonderful people, learning experiences and great games. I learned what it means to be an athletics administrator; that it’s truly about the student-athlete.

5. What advice or recommendations would you give to current ISU sport management students trying to break into the sport industry?

My advice is get into the business now. A degree in sport management isn’t enough. Whether the passion might be in college athletics, professional sports or the minor leagues, students need to get involved. College athletics and sports in general are fast-paced. Those hiring are looking for direct relatable experience. There are many ways to get involved whether that is volunteering, internships or graduate assistantships. Be patient and be involved. Be mobile to move up within college athletics. Lastly, don’t expect high pay. It’ll come, but it’ll take time. College athletics typically isn’t the highest paying industry. If you’re looking to make big money fast, look somewhere else.
Illinois State Sport Management updates

The Illinois State Sport Management Program was represented this past school year at the 2012 London Olympics. Graduate Lucas Maniezio ‘07 travelled with the Brazilian contingent as a marketing manager for Nike. Maniezio works extensively with Brazil’s national football (soccer) teams, handling all of their Nike apparel and footwear needs.

Several ISU alums have been building their personal brand through guest sport industry blog columns. Kelby Weiter ‘12 and Hannah Deutsch ‘13, who both work at sport marketing company Old Hat Creative, penned several pieces for the popular Migala Report website this past year. In February, Katie Nessling ‘13 also posted on the Migala Report. Meanwhile, Brian Nystrom ‘11, took time out of his schedule as Marketing Coordinator at the University of Minnesota-Duluth to write a column for the National Association of Collegiate Marketing Administrators online library.

Illinois State students had several unique opportunities to hear face-to-face from sport industry heavyweights without leaving campus this past school year. Last fall, NFL Hall of Famer and former Players Association representative Alan Page was on campus to talk to students. Then this spring, Olympic gold medal-winning sprinter and International Olympic Committee Rule 40 opponent Sanya Richards-Ross spoke to several student groups on campus. In addition, ISU’s School of Communication hosted their annual COM Week activities, which included speakers Tom Sheridan, Tom Crawford, and Kurt Pegler. Sheridan is the Senior Director of Ticket Sales for the Chicago White Sox, while Crawford is the Vice President and General Manager of The Specialized Marketing Group Inc. Pegler is a sports anchor with CBS’ Peoria affiliate, WMBD 31.

In addition to hearing from industry leaders in-person, ISU sport management students heard from a variety of speakers via Skype this past year. Notable names include Buffy Filippell, founder of sport job website teamworkonline.com; J.W. Cannon, Sponsorship Executive with UPS; Phil Esten, executive associate athletic director at Cal-Berkeley; and Dave Baldwin, manager of new business with the Phoenix Suns.

In mid-November, ISU Sport Management alum Buddy Sodemann ‘12 made a return to Bloomington-Normal with his Loras Duhawks men’s basketball team as they took on Illinois Wesleyan. Current sport management students Quincy Henderson and Ashley Schrader are currently graduate assistants with Titan athletics (men’s basketball and media relations, respectively), while Sean Johnson ‘13 is a former IWU player. All four individuals got together with Nels Popp prior to the game.

Congratulations to Childress Sports Consulting, co-founded by ISU sport management alum Andrea Mosher ‘08, as they continued their growth this past year working with student-athletes at both the high school and college levels. Childress clients included some of the biggest surprises in college sports during the 2012-13 campaign, including Notre Dame football, Florida Gulf Coast athletics, and Cal-Berkeley women’s basketball. To learn more about Mosher and Childress Sports Consulting, visit www.childresssports.com.
In December, Louisville hosted the 2012 NCAA Division I Volleyball championships at the YUM! Center. As the volleyball media relations contact for the University of Louisville, ISU sport management alum Nancy Worley ’83 was right in the middle of the action. Current ISU sport management student Marcus King ’13 caught up with Worley after watching Texas defeat Oregon in the championship match. Two weeks earlier, a crew of ISU sport management students also travelled to Louisville’s KFC YUM! Center, this time to watch the Redbird men’s basketball team fall a bucket short of topping eventual national champion Louisville in a Dec. 1 matchup.

This spring, ISU sport management alum Brendan Reilly ’11 brokered the first deal between his company, EON Reality, and a major sport client, the University of Kansas athletic department. Reilly heads up EON Reality’s Sports Division, a company which develops 3D sport simulators that can re-create game situations, allowing athletes to train in virtual reality. Some have compared the cutting edge technology to being immersed into a video game. To read more about Reilly’s project, check out this Fox Sports Kansas City story: http://www.foxsportskansascity.com/collegefootball/kansas-jayhawks/story/KU-bringing-virtual-3D-simulator-on-campus?blockID=886033

In March, ISU sport management professors Nels Popp and Todd Fischer were asked to be judges for the Big Ten athletics marketing awards. The two rated athletic department submissions in 10 different categories, such as best sponsorship activation, best student promotion, best social media campaign, and best schedule poster. Winners were announced at the Big Ten marketing meeting in Chicago prior to the Big Ten Men’s Basketball tournament.

Two of ISU’s sport management alums were asked to visit campus this past school year to speak to students aspiring to break into the sport industry. Mike Brant ’11, now a Race and Sponsorship Director with Red Frog events, participated in ISU’s Recreation and Parks Administration Student Symposium in March. Brant discussed his experiences in event management and sponsorship sales, including his past experiences with the Kansas City Royals, Anaheim Angels, and Normal CornBelters. Then in April, ISU’s Assistant Athletic Director for Communications, Mike Williams ’07, participated in the School of Communications ComWeek to discuss working in sport media. Williams has also added diaper changing to his skill set as he and his wife, Amanda, welcomed a new baby to the family this past summer, Adalynn Louisa.

ISU Sport Management alum Mike Schulte ’10 had a historic season-opener in his role as Director of Ticket Sales with the Peoria Chiefs. On April 4, the Chiefs posted their largest opening day crowd in 25 years, drawing 3,422 fans to O’Brien Field. Over the winter, the Chiefs moved their single-A MLB affiliation from the Chicago Cubs to the St. Louis Cardinals.

The ISU Sport Management and Recreation Administration programs again hosted the 3rd Annual Uncle Bill’s Storage Golf Scramble to benefit the Miracle League of Central Illinois. This year’s student-run event, hosted at the Bloomington Country Club, attracted 136 golfers and raised over $9,000. The festivities included golf, meals, and a silent auction featuring some impressive sport memorabilia such as autographed items from Brian Urlacher, Jonathan Toews, and Alexei Ramirez, as well as numerous tickets to major league and college sporting events.

On May 19, second year sport management students D.J. Haurin and Mike Spain held the second annual Marfan Mad Dash. The 5K event held at Tipton Trails Park in Bloomington saw nearly 100 runners compete. The event generated $2,012, with proceeds going to the National Marfan Foundation. The Marfan Mad Dash was founded in 2012 by ISU sport management student Stephanie Barnes ’12, whose brother David was diagnosed with Marfan’s syndrome.

ISU’s Director of Athletic Marketing, L.B. Nagle ’10, and her team had an impressive showing in the 2013 National Association of Collegiate Marketing Administrators (NACMA) Best of Awards. The Redbird staff entered submissions in seven categories and took home one gold, one silver, and two bronze honors. NACMA staff voted ISU’s Retro Game/Taste of the Redbirds event as the best entry in the “Single Day Attendance Promotion” category for group two schools, while their Coach Campus Caravan initiative earned a second place showing in the “Student Promotion” category.

The next issue of ISU’s alumni magazine, STATEside, will feature an article about ISU graduates working in the sport industry. Anecdotes from several Sport Management alums feature prominently in the story. The magazine should be available in August.
McLaughlin turns Graduate Professional Practice into position in MMA industry

By Lauren McLaughlin, ’13

As a 24-year-old looking to make her mark in the sports industry, it was time to take a chance on myself. I had always been told making it in the industry would be tough, but with a little risk taking and persistence, I was able to get my chance.

After I applied for a public relations job with Bellator MMA and made it as the final candidate, there was one obstacle standing in my way: my age. The executives at Bellator were concerned that my lack of years in the industry and at the age of 24, I wasn’t qualified for the job.

I believe sport directly emulates life and has taught me that in order to grow as an individual, it is vital to take a chance and test your boundaries as a person. I decided to take a chance on myself and a conversation that could have been a make or break moment for my career turned out to be my opportunity to prove to Bellator that I was the candidate they were looking for.

Bellator asked me to join the team for eight weeks to prove my worth and see how I fit within the industry and organization. Within a matter of three days, I packed a suitcase, moved to the west coast and was engulfed in an industry sector that was completely new to me.

Bellator MMA is the world’s largest tournament-based mixed martial arts organization and was founded in 2008 by Chairman and CEO Bjorn Rebney. Known as the “Toughest Tournament in Sports,” it features a tournament-based, single-elimination format that awards the winner of each eight-person tournament a guaranteed world title fight against the current Bellator World Champion in that weight class. At Bellator, fighters control their own destiny through their performance inside the cage. There are no biases through matchmaking or promoters, and Bellator prides itself on title shots being earned and not given.

It’s most recent expansion happened in December 2011, when Bellator sold a majority stake to Spike TV parent company, Viacom. Partnering with Viacom has allowed Bellator to be aired in more than 110 countries and 100 million homes weekly. Bellator events began airing live as of January 2013 on Thursday nights on Spike TV.

Throughout my interviews, my supervisor joked that life at Bellator was like a traveling circus, and wasn’t far off. For 12 straight weeks, the crew would travel to a different city each week and host a Bellator show.

My basic weekly agenda consisted of a travel day on Tuesday, preparation and live weigh-ins on Wednesday, fight night on Thursdays, and a travel day on Friday. In my first season I traveled to Thackerville, Okla., Mount Pleasant, Mich., Atlanta, Ga., Charlotte, N.C., Salt Lake City, Utah, Albuquerque, N.M., Pachenga, Calif., Bangor, Maine, Tampa, Fla., and Atlantic City, N.J.

My primary duties consisted of coordinating and promoting local market outreach for the events and cities Bellator traveled to. I would write and pitch story lines to national and local markets, as well as create press materials for media members. I was able to work closely with the athletes and served as the direct liaison between the fighters and media outlets for various appearances and interviews.

In the days leading up to fight night there was a lot of preparation and coordinating with the operations crew, athlete managers and the Spike TV staff. Not only did I get to learn from a global sports organization, I had the chance to get an inside look at production details and elements that go into a live show. I attended production meetings every Wednesday night to discuss the layout and segments for the Spike TV show. From commercial breaks and walk-out songs, to which corner (red or blue) will enter the cage first and ending the show before midnight to not lose viewers, it was eye-opening to be a part of the group who at the end of the day has the control over the success of the world-wide event.

Life in MMA is unlike anything I had ever been involved with. Mixed martial artists truly changed my definition of an athlete. In a full combat sport, the fighters need to be skilled at all of the MMA techniques in order to be successful. Being on the inside and seeing the training, weight cut and dedication made me realize that it takes a special person to be able to step into the Bellator cage.

One of the most eye opening aspects of MMA life was the respect level that the fighters have for each other. When the athletes enter the cage, it is all business. The interesting part for me came after the fights were over. After 15 minutes of brutal fighting and combat, one usually bruised and bloody, the two fighters would shake hands, exchange a hug and even hang out later that night. You can feel the levels of respect most MMA fighters have for each other, after they compete, and it was like nothing I had ever seen at a sporting event.

There is such a wide range of individuals that step into the Bellator cage, from former Olympians, all-American wrestlers, Brazilian jiu jitsu artists, business owners to fathers trying to make a living for their families.

I had a great experience working with the various fighters and having the chance to learn their stories.

At the end of my eight weeks, Bellator hired me full time, and I feel so fortunate to continue my professional development with the organization. As the new Public Relations Manager, the sports industry reputation does hold true, that sometimes you need to step outside of your comfort zone to get what you want.

When the cage is finally built and the banners have been raised, the anticipation builds, and I am eager for my next season with Bellator MMA.
The Illinois State Sport Management program is made up of students with a wide array of interests. From communications to sales and operations to marketing, each of the 30 number of students in the program have their own goals and aspirations in the sport industry.

The program’s annual networking and professional development trip, this year to St. Louis, was reflective of that diversity. Students met and conversed with sport professionals from a variety of sports and fields on Thursday, October 4.

“We really wanted to have something for everybody on this trip,” Sean Johnson ’13, who co-organized the trip with Lisa Juliano ’13, said. “It was our goal to make it beneficial for everybody, and I believe it was.”

The trip began with a visit to the Scottrade Center, home of the St. Louis Blues. The group was greeted with a presentation from Tim Ryan, (Operations Coordinator, St. Louis Sports Commission), before a panel discussion featuring David Pokorny (Marketing Director, Fox Sports Midwest), Bob Wallace (Partner, Thompson Coburn, LLP) and Matt Brown (Director of Client Services, St. Louis Blues). Students got to see Wallace’s Super Bowl ring he got as a former St. Louis Rams employee up close, while Brown provided insight on what it was like working for a league that was, at the time, in a lockout.

After departing the Scottrade Center, the group made its way to Joe Buck’s for lunch and more knowledge. First, the students heard from a panel featuring Patty Viverito (Senior Associate Commissioner, Missouri Valley Conference), Jane Higgins (President, Jane Higgins and Associates), Brandon Miller (General Manager, MVC Sports Properties) and Bradley Hewitt (Athletic Director, SIUE).

Following the panel, keynote speaker Doug Elgin (MVC Commissioner) addressed the group. Elgin, widely regarded as one of the nation’s most respected intercollegiate athletics administrators, shared stories about his path and tips for the students moving forward.

“Hearing from Doug Elgin was great,” Kelvyn Hemphill ’13, said. “Learning about his path in college athletics, even for a short time, was extremely insightful. He’s so well-regarded in the profession.”

The next and final stop for the group was the Edward Jones Dome, home of the St. Louis Rams. Before the Rams’ NFL Network Thursday Night game against the Arizona Cardinals, the group was treated to a tour of the facility that covered numerous suites and field access by Mike O’Keefe (Vice President of Sales, St. Louis Rams). Following the tour, the students took in the game between the Rams and Cardinals with various members of the industry living in St. Louis.

“Having never been to a NFL game before, I was blown away,” Maggie Ahern ’14 said. “We got to see so much of what we’ve been learning about in class in action, while still having the chance to network.”

Following the game, the group departed back to Normal. In the hyper-competitive sport industry, networking and knowledge is crucial to success in the field. The students came away with many contacts and ideas about how to continue their careers following graduation.

“Moving forward, I’ll definitely continue to draw on the experience of the St. Louis trip,” Dani Kabbes ’14 said. “We were exposed to so many people and so much knowledge in one day that will continue to benefit all of us.”
ISU alum Kelly grows personally and professionally in first year at Penn State

ISU sport management alum Tim Kelly ’10 took a job as assistant defensive line coach at Penn State shortly after the Nittany Lions endured one of the most high-profile scandals in college athletics history. Kelly shares his experiences and what he learned from his first year in Happy Valley during an interview for News from the Sidelines:

You played football at Eastern Illinois and have now coached at Ball State, Minnesota State-Moorhead, and Illinois Wesleyan. What has been the biggest difference for you personally in making the move to Penn State?

Well first and foremost, the most obvious difference is that this is Penn State, and they spare no expense. In terms of our facilities and our support staff, they are absolutely incredible. I would be willing to bet they rival any university’s in the country. Another difference was seeing how important this football program is to the surrounding community. When people say that it is the driving force behind Central Pennsylvania, it is not a lie - this area comes to life on gameday. People live and breathe Penn State Football and that is illustrated on Saturday afternoons when we are able to put 108,000 people in Beaver Stadium. They are great fans, too. They are smart and they know the game. They care about this team. We are their team. The amount of emotion that was in Beaver Stadium for our season opener was beyond words.

How would you describe the culture of the athletic department when you arrived in Happy Valley?

I arrived here on April 25, 2012. The culture in our building was focusing on moving forward and preparing for Ohio University and the upcoming season.

What, specifically, do you think was the toughest thing for the football program to overcome this past season?

The obvious answer would be the sanctions that were handed down in July that allowed our athletes to transfer free of penalty. We ended up losing something like 14 players, including our leading rusher, leading receiver, and punter/kicker. In the same breath, without those sanctions I am not sure that our season would have turned out the way it did. Don’t get me wrong, it most definitely made the journey more difficult, but there was also a unique benefit that came along with it. Everyone who was in that locker room was there because that is where they wanted to be. If they wanted to leave, they had the opportunity, but instead they made their decision and stayed, because that is what they wanted to do. Team building and leadership wasn’t an issue, because that was already forged through the sanctions. Our leadership was absolutely incredible.

What lessons have you taken working under Bill O’Brien?

First of all, I am incredibly lucky to be working with this staff. The staff members I work with here are incredible men. They are great football coaches, and even better people. Because of that, the lessons are learned here on a daily basis. The most important lesson I have learned so far isn’t a revolutionary idea. Be honest. Be yourself. Like I said, not an incredibly ground breaking thought. However, it is his ability to put that thought into action that has been the most important lesson I have learned. A player can walk into 10 different coaches’ offices, ask a question and get the same answer. Honesty allows everyone to be on the same page and it develops trust. Once you start being dishonest, either in how you handle yourself or how you respond to questions, you begin to put up a front that the student-athletes can see right through. In order to get your players to play hard for you, they have to be able to trust you, not only as a coach but as a man as well.

What is something most people outside of Penn State don’t understand about the athletic program (and football program) there?

Before getting here, I was unaware as to how important this program is to this community. Not just financially, but emotionally as well. The amount of support that is shown for us is overwhelming. I am not sure that can be fully appreciated unless you experience it first-hand. Another thing that most people may not understand is the quality of student-athletes we work with. Not only are they incredible athletes, but they are good people. Our players do everything we ask them to do without question. We never have to worry about anyone being late. Our guys practice hard. They are just well rounded student-athletes that love to play football for Penn State. Finally, I am not sure people fully understand how much pride our guys take in being a Penn State football player. When you walk through our facility and see the All-American wall or the Letterman wall (a wall with the name of every individual that has lettered in football at Penn State) you get this sense that you are a part of something incredibly special. Our players take great pride in not only being a part of the great Penn State tradition, but also knowing that they are going to be the ones that take us into the new era of Penn State Football.

What was the feeling in the locker room after that final thrilling home game victory over Wisconsin?

The most incredible feeling I have ever had. I have never been so proud of any group of players than I was of this 2012 football team. They had been through so much, the sanctions, the 0-2 start, a tough loss on national television, losing our leader the week before, and then to see them come out and overcome a 14-0 deficit was incredible. Plus the way it ended, with our kicker who had struggled earlier in the season, hitting the game winner in OT… it was like it was straight from a movie. If you watch the last play of the game when Wisconsin missed the field goal, and the reactions of our players on the field and sidelines… it is indescribable. Everything came full circle, and believe me it wasn’t easy, but I wouldn’t have wanted it any other way.

What sort of approach has the football program and athletic department taken in moving past last year’s turmoil?

To focus on today. It was made clear to us that these are the set of rules that we are forced to play under. We can’t do anything about it, so we might as well put ourselves in the best position possible to win.

Did you notice anything different about how players dealt with the crisis as well as moving out of the Joe Paterno era?

They really came together and leaned on one another for support. Like I previously mentioned, the tradition and pride that our student-athletes have in playing for Penn State really provided a rallying point for our team. A lot of the players realized the reasons they came to Penn State (education, great coach, great football, great tradition, great teammates) were all still intact. The few people who isolated themselves ended up leaving.

How has being a part of this past season at Penn State impacted you personally and professionally?

It has impacted me tremendously, on both levels. Professionally, just experiencing firsthand how the organization is operated has been incredible. On top of it, being able to see the level of crisis management that was implemented in July and early August is something that has hopefully prepared me for any obstacle that may present itself in my future. Above all, professionally speaking, it has reinforced my prior beliefs that this business is all about relationships - relationships with the players, coaches and anyone who is associated in your program. In order to have everyone going the same direction, working for the same goal, everyone involved needs to know exactly what is expected and where they stand. Personally, being able to see that you can be a successful BCS level coach and still be a great father and husband is very encouraging. Throughout this business you hear horror stories of the amount of time you need to spend away from your family and how it can tear a family apart. This past season has showed me that you can be a great father and husband, like the members, if you make the time for it. At the end of the day, the most important thing is your family.
Behind the scenes at the 2013 ISU Sport Management Symposium

By Tracey Lonergan ’13

When it comes to organizing the annual ISU Sport Management Symposium, a great deal of time and effort goes into planning the event. This year’s symposium was planned by two second year ISU Sport Management graduate students, Tracey Lonergan and Katie Nessling. The ISU Sport Management Symposium took place in February and attracted a record number of 275 attendees from six different states.

The planning process for the symposium started roughly six months prior to the event. An initial meeting was held to discuss the goals and logistics of the event. After everyone was on the same page, they set out to accomplish the first task of securing a venue. This year the symposium was hosted at the Chateau Hotel and Conference Center in Bloomington, Ill. This venue accommodated a larger number of attendees.

After the venue was secured, the main focus was to lock down speakers and internship organizations. Our Keynote speaker was Pat Williams, the Senior Vice President of the Orlando Magic. The panelists this year included a wide variety of sports business professionals from many different settings. Panelists included:

- Phil Bedella, Vice President and General Manager, Comcast SportsNet Chicago
- Jay Blunk, Executive Vice President, Chicago Blackhawks
- Eric Buchanan, General Manager, Texas A&M Sports Properties
- Brian Gainor, Director of Strategy and Analytics, Freshwire
- Tracie Hitz, Chief Marketing Officer, Old Hat Creative
- Jennifer Larson, Assistant Athletics Director for Sales & Marketing, University of Illinois
- Brad Nagel, Fan Service Manager, Chicago Cubs
- Clair Peterson, Tournament Director, PGA John Deere Classic
- Jake Vernon, President and Founder, Get Real Sports Sales

With such a fantastic panel of speakers set up, it was now time to focus on the marketing efforts of the symposium.

Another Sport Management graduate student, DJ Haurin, was recruited to help with the design aspect of the marketing materials which included a save-the-date notice, event flyer, and registration form. A website was also created to include all information about the symposium. The flyer was sent to all sport management programs in the Midwest, in addition to being posted on sports websites and blogs. A press release was also distributed. Once all of the marketing materials were ready to go, it was time to focus on getting participants to register for the event. From October to February the emphasis was on processing registrations and spreading the word about the symposium. During that time many different tasks were accomplished such as securing equipment for the event day, purchasing gifts for the speakers, and organizing an on-air radio interview with Pat Williams.

One new aspect to the symposium this year was the live streaming of the event provided by Sports Business Education Network. This allowed students and professionals anywhere in the world to watch the event live (the video has been archived on the ISU Sport Management website). We also developed a hashtag, #ISUSYM13, that allowed Twitter users to follow the event and interact with one another.

In the last few weeks prior to the event, the time was spent finalizing last minute details and putting finishing touches on the event. The goal was to create an event that people would talk about after they left and to which students would want to return. Between the panel of speakers that were assembled, advice given to students aspiring to break into the industry, and the attention to detail, the third annual ISU sport management symposium was a success. The feedback received from both attendees and speakers was positive and confirmed the goal was accomplished.
ISU Students gain valuable experience with Graduate Assistantships

Nearly all of Illinois State’s graduate Sport Management students participate in a graduate assistantship position while working their way through school. Graduate assistantships allow students to gain valuable industry experience and connections, while at the same time cover tuition expenses and provide stipends to cover living expenses. Illinois State sport management students have completed graduate assistantships with organizations such as Illinois State Athletics, Illinois State Campus Recreation, Illinois Wesleyan Athletics, the Bloomington Blaze (hockey), Bloomington Extreme (arena football), and Four Seasons Health Club. This edition of News From the Sidelines will introduce readers to a few of our graduate assistants in the class of 2014.

Erin Brown
Hometown: Frisco, Texas
GA Position: ISU Athletics, Compliance
Undergraduate Education: Oklahoma State University
Major: Physical Education
Prior Sport Management Experience: Softball student manager at both the Ohio State University and Oklahoma State University ... NCAA Women’s Soccer Regional Merchandise Coordinator ... Oklahoma State softball camp director during the summer of 2011 ... volunteered the last two years at the FCS football Championship.

Primary duties and Responsibilities with GA position:
I have five primary responsibilities:
1.) Academic Reviews
2.) Updating Grids
3.) Student Athlete Management
4.) Manage CARA (Countable Athletic Related Activities)
5.) The Bird Newsletter

What have been some of your best experiences with your GA position this year:
I was lucky enough to travel two times my first summer on the job (within the first two months of my assistantship). We travelled to Atlanta for the NCAA Compliance Convention which was a phenomenal experience. Being so new to compliance, that was a great way for me to get my feet wet within the industry. We also went to St. Louis for the MVC Compliance Meetings which was another wonderful learning and networking opportunity.

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What have been some of your best experiences with your GA position this year:
I have been able to do many different things. I haven’t been held up doing just sales calls. I have done marketing, graphic design, game operations and more. It has been a great, well-rounded experience.

What has been your favorite thing about your experience at Illinois State: When you come to Illinois State, you don’t know anyone, but we have clicked as a cohort and we enjoy spending time together and doing fun things throughout the course of the year. From traveling with the class to St. Louis, to traveling with the Redbirds to Louisville for a basketball game, we enjoy some great opportunities with our fellow classmates.

What are your career ambitions: I hope to continue to work in Corporate Sales for a while until moving to the other side of the ball and work for a major corporation in their sports marketing division.

Matt Stone
Hometown: Boone, Iowa
GA Position: Bloomington Blaze Hockey Club, Game Operations and Corporate Sales
Undergraduate Education: Simpson College
Major: Sports Administration and Business Management
Minor: Coaching, Computer Information Systems
Prior Sport Management Experience: Undergraduate Assistant at Simpson College in Athletic Events ... Activities Intern at Waukee High School ... National Teams Intern and Contract Working for United States Track and Field

Primary duties and Responsibilities with GA position:
I am responsible for the oversight of all corporate sales for the Bloomington Blaze Hockey team and the Bloomington Edge Indoor Football team. I meet with current and potential corporate clients in order to generate revenue for the organization. I also serve as Director of Game Operations for the Bloomington Blaze which includes writing game scripts, directing games and creating a great fan environment.

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Ashley Schrader
Hometown: DeKalb, Ill.
GA Position: Sports Information Assistant, Illinois Wesleyan Athletics
Undergraduate Education: Illinois State
Major: Journalism
Prior Sport Management Experience: Sports Editor at the Vidette, the Illinois State student newspaper, for four years ... freelance work as a writer for local publications on prep sports.

Primary duties and Responsibilities with GA position:
I work as an assistant sports information director at Illinois Wesleyan where I write game recaps for away and home events, update website content, design media guides, and update general sport information.

What have been some of your best experiences with your GA position this year:
There is a uniqueness and sense of unity to working at a small Division III school, and I have liked being a part of the tight-knit athletic community in general. I have really enjoyed being a part of postseason runs with the IWU teams and seeing the ins and outs of their seasons (especially basketball). It was also a pretty neat experience when the Titan men’s basketball team hosted the CCIW Championships; it was a busy weekend, but well worth it.

What has been your favorite thing about your experience at Illinois State: I love the small classroom atmosphere and relationships that are developed in and out of class. It’s been neat to learn about situations and decisions that I am actually dealing with and will face in my future career.

What are your career ambitions: I would love to work in a sports organization at the high school or college level. But my career dream would be to work at the Olympic Games.
An Insider’s Look at ISU’s Hancock Stadium Renovation

This fall, Illinois State Athletics will complete an exciting new addition to their facilities, a major renovation to the home of Redbird Football, Hancock Stadium. We asked ISU sport management alum and ISU’s Assistant Athletic Director for Development, Matt Lyons ‘10, to share some insight about the project.

Give us a little background about the Hancock Renovation project. The Hancock Stadium Renovation project encompasses demolishing the old east grandstand and replacing it with a $25 million new east grandstand that will bring capacity to roughly 13,000. It is the largest construction project for Illinois State Athletics since Redbird Arena opened in 1989. The new grandstand will provide a prominent and impressive entrance to the University and community and will feature seven stories of brick columns and arches, and a glass façade facing Main St. Fan amenities were a priority and every seat in the grandstand will feature a bleacher-back or stadium chair. The highlight of the project is a 5,500 sq. ft. indoor club located on the fifth story of the facility. Seven luxury suites bookend the indoor club, and a press box sits atop the indoor club.

What has been the biggest challenge in working with this project? Certainly the most public undertaking has been the suite and club seat sales. We have been fortunate to receive fantastic support for the project from the University and community. As such, we were able to sell out of our suites and all 500 club seats in 14 months of fundraising; a full five months prior to kicking off the first game. Now the focus has shifted to the sale of general season tickets and other ticket plans.

There are a lot of aspects involved in stadium construction/renovation involving a lot of stakeholders. What are some of the things you have done to help in the communication and management process to keep everyone on the same page? Communicating to a wide array of stakeholders is an important part of renovating a facility, particularly one as public and prominent as this project. Fortunately, campus administration had the foresight to organize a Hancock Stadium Task Force made up of a variety of University constituents who are impacted by or involved in football gameday which allowed for an easy flow of communication internally. Externally, we’ve stepped up to the plate to help make this happen. We’ve found that concise, regular, and repeated communication through a variety of mediums is the key to successfully communicating our message clearly and thoroughly.

What have been some of the opportunities and obstacles in working with architecture and construction teams? We’ve been fortunate to work with an architecture firm (Browning Day Mullins & Dierdorf) who designed our recently renovated baseball stadium, so there is already a level of familiarity in place that we’ve benefited from tremendously. Likewise, our construction firm (Vissering Construction) has recently constructed buildings on campus, which allows for a better understanding of campus policy and procedure that in turn greases the wheels from the project management side of things. When the President approved the project one of his main directives was to create a facility that changed the entrance to the University and was representative of the growth and prominence of Illinois State University. The creative latitude we were given to produce a ‘wow’ factor and my involvement in that process from an early phase was a personally rewarding experience.

What are your favorite features of the new facility and what are fans going to notice the most? I think the fans are really going to be impressed by the magnitude of the facility and will be drawn to the aesthetics of the main gate. It’s essentially a seven-story building sitting 50 ft. off of Main St. That in itself is going to impress, but the brick columns and archways will really set this facility apart. My favorite feature is the two-story glass façade facing campus that houses the indoor club. For me, that exemplifies the ‘wow’ factor we were trying to create.

What most excites you, personally, about this project? This renovation is really just the tip of the iceberg for Illinois State Athletics. I’ve been incredibly enthused by how many of our stakeholders have stepped up to the plate to help make this happen. I think the success of this project, considering its prominence on Main St., will encourage more fans to support the Redbirds. This project shows a commitment to excellence and that sort of commitment by a University is contagious and invigorating among a fan base. I’m very excited to see where the momentum we’ve created will lead us.
Every year, the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA) hosts their annual convention in June. The event is a gathering spot for anyone working in college athletics as many other college athletic sub-associations, such as marketing, compliance, development, media relations, and others also host their gatherings under the NACDA umbrella.

At the 2013 version in Orlando, Redbirds were everywhere. For the first time, the Illinois State sport management program held a social hour connecting those with a connection to ISU sport management or athletics. Over 20 folks attended, including four current graduate students and several alums who work for schools such as Kansas, Illinois State, and Utah State or organizations such as marketing agency Old Hat Creative and the College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin. Katie Nessling ’13, who had just started a post-graduate internship at ESPN’s Wide World of Sports in Orlando, and former ISU sport management student Kyle Brant, a group ticket sales executive with the Orlando Magic, made the trip over to the Marriott World Center. Also attending the social were several former ISU athletics employees and former ISU Sport Management program director Chad McEvoy, who now heads up the graduate program at Syracuse University.

The event proved to be a valuable networking opportunity for the students in attendance, several of whom received travel funding from the School of Kinesiology and Recreation. First year student, Maggie Ahern ’14, was one of 10 students from a national pool to receive the Mike Cleary Stipend from the National Association of Collegiate Marketing Administrators (NACMA), which help cover her travel costs. Included in her award was admission to the NACMA “Basic Training” program which enabled her to network with some of the top college marketers in the country.

Current program director Nels Popp and McEvoy conducted a Think Tank session at the conference, hosted by Winthrop Intelligence. The workshop was attended by athletic administrators from schools such as Arizona, Oregon, West Virginia, Duke, Mississippi State, and Central Florida, with the idea to generate research ideas to help schools improve their revenue generation efforts.

Other highlights included Redbirds Zach Schroeder ’14, Matt Stone ’14, and Sean Johnson ’13 sweeping first through third in the New Era Pinstripe 5k Run and the Old Hat Creative Poolside Party, organized by OHC employees and former Redbirds Kelby Weiter ‘12 and Hannah Deutsch ’13. Attendees also had the chance to hear from some of the most recognizable and influential names in the business of college athletics throughout the conference. Notable panelists included coaches like Mike Krzyzewski and Urban Myer, as well as media personalities such as Jay Bilas, Dick Enberg, Rece Davis, and Dan Wetzel.