

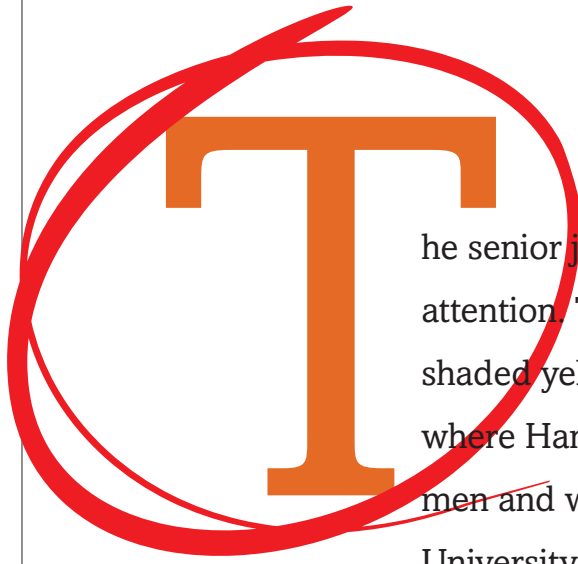


# COMPETING TO GET A JOB

A STUDENT-ATHLETE'S GUIDE

**Got team spirit? These careers do, too • Your job  
search game plan • Advice from successful grads  
• Building a resume**

Edited by Megan Fernandez | Photo illustrations by Arnel Reynon



By Amy Wimmer Schwarb

he senior journalism major on line 70 has Julie Hammer's attention. The row containing this student's name is shaded yellow, the color of caution, on a spreadsheet where Hammer tracks the post-grad plans of all 492 young men and women on the sports rosters at Northwestern University. Hammer marks in red students who have a job. Gray, headed to grad school. Green is for those hoping to keep playing after college – in the NFL, training to make the Olympic fencing team, golf qualifying school.

These days Hammer, an assistant athletics director, is fretting over that journalism major, whose talent

and heart seem to outsize the shrinking job market of the industry she wants to join. The woman found time, despite the practice and competition demands of her Division I soccer team, to spend the summer before graduation in Nicaragua, telling the stories of people seeking ocular care from a nonprofit there. She pursued another opportunity in Calcutta, India, where she helped launch a magazine.

"She's doing great, and she's done all the right things. But she still doesn't have a job," said Hammer, noting that she will continue working with the soccer-playing journalism major until she finds a professional direction or chooses another route. "Once an athlete, always an athlete. We need to figure out what's next for her."

Across the country, in athletics departments and campus career development offices, hundreds of administrators like Hammer work to equip students with the confidence and know-how they need to land their first jobs. For college athletes,

that transition can require some additional insight. Sure, balancing coursework with training, practice and competitions requires high-level time management, and being part of a team means putting an organization's goals above your own. But how do you convince employers that your college sports experience helps build their team?

"You have to learn how to use your athletics experience," said Kellianne Milliner, assistant athletics director for compliance, academic and student services at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. "In an interview, learn to talk about how leadership played a role in being a captain – or, if you weren't a captain, how you work as a team."

In other words, Milliner notes, college athletes have career skills. They just have to sell them.

The trick is to work on this well before graduation looms. It can be difficult to switch gears, but knowing the obstacles helps overcome them.

*Continued on page 59*



HIRE LEARNING:

*"Determination, passion and drive are three qualities that good coaches AND good bosses look for. No matter what you want to do, if you possess those qualities, you've got a strong start."*

Elaine Harvey, assistant athletics director, Johnson State Mount Holyoke '11 \* women's soccer



HIRE LEARNING:

*"Leverage your time management skills in the interview. Explaining how I maintained a high GPA while traveling every weekend in addition to practice and two jobs definitely impressed any interviewer I spoke with."*

Ben Kiskey, industrial automation engineer, Siemens Pittsburgh '14 \* cross country and track and field

# KNOW YOUR GAME PLAN

You always have a game plan before you step on the field. You need a similar plan to score a job – even if your resume isn't teeming with internships and part-time jobs. Here is how the experts say you can do it.

## PRACTICE

Just like before a big game, hard work and preparation come before the win.

**Work out early:** Underclassmen should find extracurricular activities that double as professional development – such as campus professional and service learning organizations. Upperclassmen should explore leadership opportunities through the campus Student-Athlete Advisory Committee or other organizations, seek out job fairs and take a careers course.

**Post up the job boards:** The NCAA's Former Student-Athlete Career Center, [NCAA.org/FSAjobs](http://NCAA.org/FSAjobs), lists job openings and allows you to post your resume for companies looking to hire student-athletes. [Teamwork.com](http://Teamwork.com), [workinsports.com](http://workinsports.com) and [ncaamarket.ncaa.org/jobs](http://ncaamarket.ncaa.org/jobs) all focus on positions in the world of athletics.

**Be a leader:** Each year, NCAA leadership devel-

opment offers programs to help college students develop their future. The Career in Sports Forum brings 200 selected athletes together to help them chart a career in athletics. And the Student-Athlete Leadership Forum, which selects approximately 300 athletes each year, provides personal development while working with other athletes, coaches, faculty and administrators. Talk to whoever oversees student-athlete development or life skills programs on your campus or visit [NCAA.org/leadershipdevelopment](http://NCAA.org/leadershipdevelopment).

**Play to your strengths:** So you think your 3.0 GPA isn't as impressive as another student's 3.5? Try explaining that you earned it while balancing 15 credit hours of classes and serving as captain of the conference champion field hockey team.

## RELY ON A TEAM

You had coaches and teammates to help improve your athletic skills. So use the coaches and teammates who can improve your career skills.

**Listen to your coach:** Large campuses are starting to hire career coaches specifically for athletics. Some, such as the University of Notre Dame, are integrating their campus alumni networks, too. On campuses that don't have athletics-specific programs, career centers help identify opportunities for networking, job shadowing and learning about different career paths.

**Get LinkedIn:** Creating a LinkedIn page is one of the first things career counselors suggest. Post a photo of yourself in business attire. In your summary, explain your accomplishments and strengths: Don't just say you developed communication skills, but say you learned to communicate effectively in a competitive environment by working with 11 teammates and coaches on a daily basis. Join groups related to your career goals.

## SCORE THE INTERVIEW

Your campus has resources to make personal

connections with professionals happy to help you out. Don't be surprised when networking turns out to be easier than it may seem.

**Attack an opening:** Go after opportunities just like you do during a game or a match. "I had a softball player, she was doing a photo shoot with ESPN, talking to the producer, letting him know what her major was. The producer said, 'We have an internship,'" said Jawauna Harding, an athletics career consultant at Oklahoma State.

**Find a go-to player:** You just need one name to get started. Look for professional connections through your campus alumni relations organization or athletics fundraising club. "It's shocking to see how willing people are to bend over backward to help you once you present yourself as someone who tries really hard and is interested," says Stephanie Felicetti, student-athlete career program director at Notre Dame.

**Get the scouting report:** People like talking about themselves and their success. Break the ice by asking how they got their jobs and moved up. What is a typical day like? What are the most interesting aspects of their jobs? Showing sincere interest makes a strong impression.

**Make a statement:** Speak in statements, not questions. For instance, don't ask new contacts if they know other people you can talk to. Instead, let them know that you would love to talk to others in the industry. "You give the person the option to provide you the information," Felicetti says. "It's less awkward."

**Go to the replay:** Send contacts a thank-you note and follow up every few months when you have something substantial to tell them. Send a short email with any updates, like a link to new work. Call or leave a voicemail whenever you need to convey your energy and attitude. And don't underestimate the power of a handwritten note — they're so rare these days that they can make you look like an MVP. — *Brian Hendrickson*



HIRE  
LEARNING  
FROM  
HIGHER-UPS

*"At a job fair, know your elevator pitch: What's your 30-second commercial of yourself? Are you including that you were not only an athlete but a captain or a leader, or earned a spot as a walk-on? That's dedication you can bring to our team."*

Marie Artim, vice president of talent acquisition for Enterprise Holdings

*"Student-athletes inherently understand team dynamics. You're trying to be the best you can be, but at the same time you're trying to move the whole team forward to achieve their goals. That's a hugely successful attribute to have in the business world, and it's something they naturally have because they've lived their athletic lives doing it. Another less obvious quality: Student-athletes are especially receptive to constructive criticism and use it to get better because they know the goal is improvement."*

Tracey Benford, partner, Goldman Sachs



# Refine that resume

Articulate how athletics experience relates to jobs skills. Here are the do's and don'ts.

Compiled by Brian Burnsed

**Shirley Reddy**  
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**Summary:**  
I possess strong leadership skills, excel at juggling multiple responsibilities and am excellent at managing my time. I attribute those abilities to four years spent balancing life as a full-time student and NCAA Division II lacrosse player. In addition to my school and lacrosse commitments, I carved out time to work as an intern in my college athletics department, honing the broadcast journalism skills I will put to use in my career.

**Education:**  
Champion University – Indianapolis, IN  
Broadcast journalism; 3.5 GPA; course work included sports broadcasting, video editing; digital communications and web design

**College athletics experience:**  
Champion University women's lacrosse  
• Devoted 20 hours per week to lacrosse while maintaining a 17-hour course load every semester  
• Voted team captain by teammates for the 2014-15 season; duties included ensuring practice began on time before coaches arrived and holding teammates accountable if they were late  
• Selected by coaching staff as team's most improved player for the 2013-14 season

**Work experience:**  
Intern, Champion University sports information department: 2014-2015  
• Assisted sports information director with shooting, and editing video recaps of the school's baseball and football games  
Camp instructor, Champion University lacrosse camp  
• Helped coaching staff instruct middle school lacrosse players during summer camps held on campus. Assisted in creating camp schedules.

**Honors:**  
• Three-time Big American Conference player of the week  
• Dean's List, four semesters  
**Leadership and volunteer activities:**  
• Member of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, 2013-15

What about teamwork, excelling under pressure or communication skills? Sports teach a great deal, Harding says, so don't neglect to mention anything you learned.

Don't be sloppy! Maintain consistent formatting throughout the document, Harding says. Here, the information is jumbled. "If they take six to 10 seconds to look at your resume, they'd better be able to find the information they need."

Harding is adamant that athletes avoid being vague on their resumes when discussing their sports. She tells them to not back away from what they learned as college athletes; instead, showcase that experience.

Consistency is important, even for dates. Here, the resume deviates from the format established earlier.

Often times, teams take part in volunteer work and community service. Include those activities. "Any student-athlete who can balance school, sport and activities is exceptional," Harding says.

Coming up short on material? Harding says an optional skills section that highlights, specifically, how you honed attributes like leadership or teamwork can help round out a resume.

Only have a cell phone? Not a problem - simply ensure that the voicemail greeting is professional.

"NCAA is a keyword search term that allows companies to narrow search results for resumes," Harding says.

Athletics experience is important, Harding says. But for a new graduate and job seeker, it should be included in the middle of the document rather than at the top.

Don't shy away from specifics when it comes to the time you spent on your athletic career. "Giving quantitative information is important," Harding says. "Sometimes employers don't understand how much work you do in a week with your sport, and so showing them numbers is crucial."

Nothing to put here? If you want to be an engineer, that could be a problem. But for athletes looking for careers in many fields, the lack of work or internship experience doesn't have to stall a career before it starts. "Employers do prefer that you have internships, but many are great about understanding that you can't always get an internship if you're a student-athlete," Harding says.

## MEET OUR EXPERT:

**Jawauna Harding, athletics career consultant at Oklahoma State University, counsels student-athletes on resume writing.**





Athletics administrators who work with students on life skills cite two common issues college athletes encounter when faced with life after school. First, they have so many immediate goals while in school – maintaining good grades, meeting obligations to the team, preparing for a season and for championships – that looking further into the future can be daunting.

“They’re focused on the right now,” Milliner said. “They’re always working on the next goal, but that goal might be getting to the playoffs and not preparing for beyond that. They go to class, they go to practice. Their lives are very structured.”

Along the way, though, college athletes can work on articulating how those skills they are honing translate into the workforce. Kristina Navarro, an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, is working with the school’s athletics director, Amy Edmonds, to develop a leadership academy for student-athletes that will help them identify their talents and learn how to articulate them.

“How do you put athletics on a resume when you’re competing against students who have had three internships or clubs and activities?” Navarro said. “They have to be able to sell the things they’ve acquired through athletics. We want to be that intentional reminder for them. It’s going to help them relate that experience to their professional future, whatever direction they’re going.”

A second common issue for athletes: establishing an identity outside of sports. “If you’ve been a gymnast since you were 4 years old, your social circle has always been your teammates, and your identity as an athlete has always been a big factor,” said Penny Semaia, senior associate athletics director for student life at the University of Pittsburgh. “It can be a struggle to go through that transition.”

For those who work closely with college athletes on developing career plans, overcoming that challenge means turning again and again to the same pieces of advice: The four years of college go fast. Start preparing for your post-sports career as a freshman. Seek opportunities along the way that will help sell you to employers. And don’t hide your athletics experience; it helps you stand out from a field of applicants.

“As an athletics department, everybody needs to be preparing these students from the first time they’re on campus,” said Summer Hutcheson, as-

*Continued on page 61*



#### HIRE LEARNING

*“Learn from every piece of feedback, praise, criticism or rejection you face.”*

Kelsey Costales, public relations account coordinator, The Silver Telegram  
Evansville '14 \* tennis

## HOW I SCORED MY JOB...

**As Told To Rachel Stark**



### Kim Oshita

English teacher and soccer coach

**COLLEGE:** Denison University, '11;  
Johns Hopkins University, '13

**MAJOR:** Sociology and anthropology, educational studies; master's in urban education

**SPORT:** Soccer

I applied for Teach for America during my senior year at Denison. In my personal statement, I made it clear that being a team player and being committed to a goal, a mission, is something that's a part of me. During the interview, whenever the questions rolled around to my strengths or challenges I had to overcome, drawing on instances from soccer really helped me.

Once I got accepted into Teach for America, I came to Baltimore and got trained, then applied to different schools. The assistant principal at the high school that hired me told me that they hired me because I played sports. He noticed that athletes tend to embrace challenges and are less likely to give up. You can have some really bad days in your first year of teaching, but he knew I wouldn't quit.

The biggest way sports have helped me as a teacher is by giving me grit and resilience to experience something that's hard but push through it. What you experienced every day in practice or a hard game, those are the same skills you need at a job that's challenging.



#### HIRE LEARNING

*“Don't be afraid to say 'I don't know.' If you're surrounded by the right people, they will see it as an opportunity for them to teach and for you to learn.”*

Marisa Bast, analyst, Chicago Mercantile Exchange  
Northwestern '14 \* softball

## Communications

Spreading a message requires more than a giver and a receiver. You need a team to draft, refine, repurpose, beautify, organize ... then redraft and repeat.

**You could be a:** writer, editor, journalist, designer, museum archivist, Web publisher, television broadcaster, public relations professional



## Environment

Creating a sustainable world is hardly a one-person job.

**You could be a:** climatologist, environmental consultant, park ranger, conservationist, arborist, geologist, outdoor educator



## Education

There is no "I" in team. No "I" in teacher either.

**You could be a:** college professor, kindergarten through 12th-grade teacher, higher education administrator, school counselor, coach, librarian



## Public Service

Do for others while working with others.

**You could be a:** nonprofit administrator, political consultant, foreign-service officer, clergy, state or local government employee, police officer, firefighter, national security agent, social worker



# Team Work

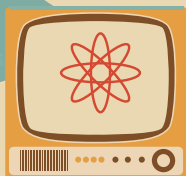
*Not sure where you fit into the working world? One skill that comes easily to a college athlete is the ability to negotiate the intricacies of team dynamics – an asset in these fields.*

By Amy Wimmer Schwarb

## Engineering and Computer Science

In the manufacturing and tech worlds, multiple minds make good ideas better.

**You could be a:** system administrator, engineer, app developer, information technology specialist, product designer, urban planner



## Law

The legal world is built on collaboration.

**You could be a:** paralegal, corporate lawyer, lobbyist, legal-aid attorney, judge



## Business

Even a high-powered real estate developer needs a team to finance, market and sell his or her plan – and an accountant to keep everyone honest.

**You could be a:** marketing professional, advertising executive, accountant, banker, real estate agent, hotel manager, shop owner, entrepreneur



## Health Sciences/ Biotech

What's better than a second opinion? A coordinated team of health professionals, putting their heads and skills together to ensure the best outcome.

**You could be a:** physician, nurse, pharmacist, veterinarian, biologist, chemist, pharmaceutical sales representative, hospital administrator, alternative-medicine practitioner, dentist, nutritionist, physical therapist



### HIRE LEARNING:



*"Tell people what your aspirations are and ask for advice from individuals that have great experience in the field. In my case, transitioning from the intercollegiate atmosphere to the interscholastic world, I found a former high school athletics director as my mentor."*

Peyton Stovall, athletics director, Lafayette Jefferson High School Ball State '08 \* men's basketball

### HIRE LEARNING:



*"In athletics your name is on every stat that you have, whether that be good or bad. The same goes for when you go out into the workforce. You must be willing to put just as much work into being great at whatever field you go into because at the end of the day, that is your new stat line."*

Kaycee Butt, assistant softball coach, Defiance Defiance '11 \* softball

## HIRE LEARNING:



*"The most important thing is how you react to failure. Do not lose that work ethic that originally got you where you are."*

Emmanuel Williams, inclusion teacher, KIPP charter school  
Pittsburgh '12 \* football

sistant athletics director at Mount Holyoke College. "They have four years for college – that's the time to practice leadership skills, to have those difficult conversations about the future."

The students who make the transition look easy, Semaia said, are those who never lose sight of their post-college game plan. "The ones that have been very successful," Semaia said, "were able to compete at a high level and still maintain the focus of preparing for life beyond sport."

Semaia tells the story of a recent Pittsburgh graduate who played linebacker on the football team.

"The thing that really made him stand out was his vibrant, outgoing personality," Semaia said. "He was never afraid to put himself out there and be willing to try new things. I knew he had potential; he just needed to sharpen his skills and learn how to be this super-extroverted guy in the professional world."

Semaia took on the student as an intern in the athletics department, a position that led to an internship handling community outreach for the San Antonio Spurs NBA team. That opportunity led the former Division I college football player to figure out his career path, and today, he is a teacher at a public charter school.

"You're not creating a backup plan for after sports," Semaia said. "It's a rest-of-life plan for what happens after sports."

Hammer, the Northwestern assistant athletics director who heads the NU for Life program, understands the challenges inherent in moving from college athlete to professional. As a softball player at Syracuse, she was an Academic All-American; today, she is in the Syracuse University's Orange Plus Hall of Fame.

"Know your particular story. Understand your experience and the skills you're developing as a student-athlete, and be able to tell a compelling narrative of your story," Hammer said. "Talk about your determination, your resilience, your time management, your teamwork. Bring all of those things up in your conversation with an employer."

So you want to work with children? Share how you related to kids at the college volleyball camp where you coached last summer. Ever talk to media after a game? Then you have learned how to handle pressure, act professionally and represent yourself and your organization in a high-profile setting. Planning a career in business? That coach you admire has likely taught you about identifying a competitor's strengths and weaknesses.

You've learned those skills better than most. Now, apply them. Articulate them. Sell yourself. **A**

## HOW I SCORED MY JOB...

As Told To Rachel Stark



## David Holiner

Financial analyst at  
Lincoln Property  
Group

**COLLEGE:** University of  
Texas at Austin, '14

**MAJOR:** Business/  
corporate  
communications

**SPORT:** Tennis

The alumni had a very big presence with tennis at UT. We would see them whenever we traveled for competition. It was a good opportunity to get to know them. These guys were all successful in their fields and were friends with other successful UT alumni, too.

After graduating, I started interviewing with companies in Austin and Dallas. It's a full-time job trying to find a job, and I had to use the same mindset I had for tennis: Just be aggressive and go after it. I got in touch with those alumni from the tennis team who could vouch for me. One of them forwarded my resume to the president of Lincoln Property Group, who was another UT grad. That led to an interview.

Every single thing you do to find a job, you learn in college athletics. People understand that you're disciplined, loyal and hard-working. In my interviews, I used that as one of my main points. Some people are too proud to ask for help, but I can't emphasize enough: Use the connections you've made as an athlete. Those people know you work hard.

## Mackenzie Novak

Finance manager at  
CreateMyTee

**COLLEGE:** Albion College, '15

**MAJOR:** Finance/business  
and organizations

**SPORT:** Lacrosse



After lacrosse practice one day, I rushed to see the final few minutes of an alum giving a talk on campus. He was speaking about what he did to start his company, CreateMyTee. The bits I really held on to had to do with the culture of the company, loving what you do and wanting to go to work every morning. That's something that directly translates to my experience with lacrosse. I really wanted to find that in the workforce.

The alum mentioned he had a few internships available, so I went up to him afterward and told him I was interested. He told me later that the first thing that struck him about me was that I was still in practice clothes but had enough confidence to come up and pursue the opportunity. He was also impressed with my multitasking as a student-athlete.

I interned at the company from May 2014 through January, taking the fall semester off and commuting to practice. I was hired full time and will start June 1.

My advice? Be confident in yourself and the attributes you bring. Because if you're not, then no one else is going to have confidence in you.