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**INTRODUCTION:**

Founded in 1879, Union College located in Barbourville, Kentucky is allied with the United Methodist Church. Union is known as an important part of southeastern Kentucky’s history. With a wonderful landscape, the home of the Bulldogs is a private school offering undergraduate and graduate programs. “The transformative nature of the liberal arts experience is enhanced at Union due to a particular commitment to personal attention—both in and out of the classroom” (Union College, 2012). The city of Barbourville and Union College have a long partnership that started back in 1879 when Union was founded. Stockholders created the college with a clear purpose; “to create opportunities for their families and the wider community, while helping the region thrive and prosper” (Union College, 2012). Those visionary leaders have gifted many things for Union by adding outdoor programs, sports, and fields of study that can take advantage of the region’s natural beauty.

When it comes to sports, Union has a long tradition in intercollegiate athletics. The first athletic team appeared on the Union Campus in 1905, it was women’s basketball. Shortly thereafter, football, men’s basketball, tennis and baseball became part of the athletics program. After many years, in 1993, the Union women’s soccer team was finally started and also has a rich history. The lady Bulldogs have won numerous conference titles and had several appearances in National Championship Tournaments, and NAIA regional tournaments.

During the summer of 2012 I had a chance to do my internship with the women’s soccer team at Union College. As an intern I had as to help the head coach with recruiting, budgeting, inventories, tournaments and everything else in order to get ready for the 2012 season. By being a part of a soccer team in college, I already had expectations of what I would have to do and this experience did not really differ from what I was expecting. However, the thing that was different from my expectations was the difference between the divisions: NAIA and NCAA. Therefore, I share all my experience during the internship at Union College such as how it helped me to develop both personally and professionally development.

**PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

There are several aspects of the experience that added to my personal development. The first one was self- confidence. For being international and living in a different country where people do not speak my language it naturally makes me insecure and not confident especially, when it comes to finding a job. When looking for internships I was already afraid of how it would be the first day of work, if people would understand me, and if I was going to be able to do everything they expected me to do. In other words, the insecurity with the language led me to several other anxieties. The fact that the head coach was also from Brazil helped me to understand all my tasks. However, some of the things I had to do I did not have her helped, and I had to figure it out on my own. One such task was recruiting. When recruiting the players, I was not allow to talk to them about the university and the programs, but I was responsible to call them to make sure they had all the documents in order to be eligible. Thus, I had to talk on the phone, which is harder for me to understand, and to have them to understand my accent. By the end of the internship, I had learned many new words, how to pronounce words properly, and finally gained some self-confidence. In consequence of that, I believe that I also increased my competence. By trying to figure it out the tasks on my own instead of asking the head coach every time what to do it, made me increase my self- confidence.

My attitude towards the internship has always been the best. Although this internship was not on the sports marketing field, since the beginning I always had a positive attitude. And I was willing to learn and experience as much as I could no matter what kind of internship I could have gotten. Thus, I believe that this attitude gave me the determination to do the internship the way that I did. When it comes to human relation skills, I have always been good. Increasing my self-confidence it also made me improve some of my human relation skills, for example, when recruiting. By the fact that I’m older than the average assistant coaches in college, I believe that I already have a level of responsibility that the head coach was expecting. On the other hand, I was in the environment with coaches from other sports and I could also see assistant coaches from different sports not acting as responsibly as they supposed to be. Thus, I also learned how not to act when it comes to my responsibilities.

I had many different experiences on my internship with the Union College Women’s Soccer Team related to my academic studies. The experiences I had became invaluable to my understanding of sports management. Even though once I graduate I have a strong desire to work in sports marketing. I believe that my internship along with my academic major, will give me a better understanding of how to market to specific sports.

**ORGANIZATION EVALUATION**

Union College is a learning community dedicated to creating personal, intellectual, and social transformation through the pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, service, and spiritual growth. Union embraces the love of learning and support each other’s desire for lifelong learning. Union College adopts collaborative, connected, and active learning. When it comes to spirituality, the institutions espouses the spiritual quest by challenging each individual to discover, intellectually articulate, and claim their spiritual faith and philosophy of life. Union advocates civility in all communications by showing respect for each other and thinks that this makes the individual roles and contributions unique. Thus, they promote integrity and collaboration by listening and being honest. Finally, they find creative ways to bring promise to fruition through opportunity.

The organizational structure of the Athletic Department at Union College is composed of the administration, athletic trainers and coaches. The administration is formed by seven members; an Administrative Assistant, a Director of Compliance/FAR, a Director of Sports Communications, a Director of Sports Broadcasting, an Assistant Director of Sports Communications, an Interim Director of Athletics, and an Athletics Admissions Counselor. The interesting fact with the Administration is that they have an Interim Director of Athletics which means that his position is not permanent. He can get either officially hired by the organization or either in the position for a short period of time. Different than Union College, Tiffin University has a hired Athletic Director. The athletic trainers have five members being a Director of Sports Medicine, and four assistant trainers. Every sport has a head coach and at least one assistant coach except for Bowling, Cheerleading, and Cycling.

During the summer the institution did not have the student’s nor all the departments working, so I did not have a chance to observe what some of the issues during the school year were. However, in the athletics department the topic discussed was always the same: the practice field. The institution only has one turf field that is used for soccer and football practices. Thus, the women’s soccer, the men’s soccer and football teams all have to share the field every day for practices. Besides that, the field has no lights which make the situation even worse because it limits the times that each team can practice. The game field for soccer has the same problem, plus the field is not turf so during the season the field gets bad because women’s and men’s teams play too often and the coaches do not have time to take care of the field.

For a NAIA school, I believe that Union College is a good school and actually great when it comes to athletics. I did not see the women’s soccer team playing, but I have heard about their record and history. In order to improve the sports program, I would invest in a sports complex. The school has one soccer field that is not in good conditions and one football field that has to be share with other sports. Another choice it would to hire an equipment manager to take care of the sports facilities and the team. Union College is a NAIA division which means that they are not a very big school. Therefore, they do not have someone responsible to take of the field as we have at Tiffin University that is a NCAA division II, so every coach is responsible for your own field. If hiring someone responsible for the fields, the coaches will have more time to focus in the office. One last choice would be have a turf field for soccer, so the soccer program would not have to share the field with football and the school would not have to hire an equipment manager to be responsible for the field.

**SUPERVISOR EVALUATION**

My supervisor was the head coach of the Women’s soccer team, Camila Mendes. Camila is coaching her second season as head coach for the Lady Bulldog soccer program. Prior to assuming the role, she spent three seasons as an assistant coach. Coach Mendes is also part of the history of the Lady Bulldog women’s soccer team. Mendes played for the bulldogs from 2001-2004 helping the Lady bulldogs to back-to-back NAIA National Tournament appearance in 2002 and 2003.

The Campinas, Brazil native ranks eighth in program history in goals scored (33), ninth in assists (23) and eighth in points (89). A four-time All-Conference selection, Mendes was named the Appalachian Athletic Conference Player of the Year in 2004. She was also recognized as a NAIA All-American honorable mention in 2002, 2003 and 2004. In addition, Mendes was named the Union College Female Athlete of the Year in 2004-05.  
After leaving Union, Mendes continued her playing career as a member of the Blackburn Rovers in England in 2005, on Requios FC in Japan in 2006 and on Real Dimension in Trinidad in 2007, helping Real Dimension capture the national championship. In 2008, Mendes coached Naparima U16 Boys team in Trinidad.

First and most important thing I noticed about Mendes during the internship is her passion for what she does. She is extremely passionate for soccer, which makes her does her job very well. I believe that the dream of every person is to be able to find a job in which going to work is not an obligation but a pleasure. As head coach of the women’s soccer team she has the responsibility to oversee scholarships, equipment, practices, games, and budget. By managing all of these, her role in the organization is to have a successful season in which they can win the championship, and bring revenue to the school. Getting farther in the championships will bring more money to the athletic, and also to the school as soon as it would be easier to recruit players.

There are several strengths that I could notice on Coach Mendes besides her passion for what she does. Camila has discipline which is essential for a coach because that will reflect on her players. During the summer, not all the coaches go to the office every day because the supervision is not very strict. However, Mendes was there every day from 9:00am to 5:00 pm, and always on time. Another positive thing about Camila is her large network. Because she played in different countries, she knows a lot of people in the sports industry.

As everybody else, coach Mendes also has her weaknesses. During the internship I had a chance to play soccer with her and some recruits. I noticed that she is extremely competitive. In the sports environment, competitiveness it is important, but cannot exceed limits to the point that it becomes a weakness. Thus, I believe that if she does not work this out, this can happen in a long-term.

The only supervisor I had during the internship was coach Mendes. Although she was watching every step of mine, I believe that she was more worry about teaching me everything than if whether or not I was doing the right things. Because she is also from Brazil and has been in the United States for 10 years, the communication was perfect. I could understand every task, and if not, she was always patient on teaching me. She also provided me an opportunity to tell her what I think about the program, and in my opinion what she could improve for next season.

**CONCLUSION**

The internship is a learning process essential to a professional who wants to be prepared to meet the challenges of a career. It is in the internship the opportunity to assimilate theory and practice knowing the reality of day-to-day career. We know that learning is pedagogically more effective when it is acquired through experience. We have much to learn restraint in practice than what we learn by reading or listening. What we do every day and often is absorbed much more efficiently. Thus, the internship at the Union College made me understand the responsibilities and situation that I’m going face whenever I get in the sports industry. As career objectives, my idea of working in the sports marketing did not change doing the internship, but the experience in coaching was definitely worth it.

If other students were considering this job and I would have to give them advices, I would tell them that in this position you need to have passion for soccer. Assistant coaches, especially for women’s soccer, do not make a decent net income but spend a lot of hours in the office. I would tell them to do the small tasks because no matter how silly they look, at some point they will be important whether they are in the field, in a meeting with the athletic department or even mowing the lawn.

In overall, I was very pleased with the opportunity that the Union College provided me, and I rate this internship as excellent, and the only thing I would have changed to make this experience better is to do the internship during the season when I could have learned more.