

NOVEMBER 2024

SPORT LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

WILLIAMS STADIUM
NOVEMBER 4-5, 2024



**Sport
Leadership
Summit**

Department of Hospitality & Sport Management
Liberty University
Lynchburg, Virginia

02

SCHEDULE

Monday, November 4, 2024**Williams Stadium - Club Level - 3rd Floor**

8:45 - 9:10 a.m. – Check-In

9:15 - 10 a.m. – Panel 1: Young Professionals

10:15 - 11 a.m. – Panel 2: Player Development & Engagement

11:15 - 12 p.m. – Panel 3: The Current State of Sport Sponsorships and Trends
for 2025 and Beyond

12 - 1 p.m. – Lunch & Keynote: Scott Sonju

1:15 - 2 p.m. – Research Posters

2:15 - 3 p.m. – Panel 4: The Role of DMOs and Sports Authorities in Sport
Tourism

3:15 - 3:45 p.m. – Panel 5: High School Athletic Administration

3:45 - 4:30 p.m. – Wrap-Up: FIFA World Cup 2026

Tuesday, November 5, 2024**Williams Stadium - Club Level - 3rd Floor**

8:45 - 9:10 a.m. – Check-In

9:15 - 10 a.m. – Panel 6: Division III Coaches

10:15 - 11 a.m. – Panel 7: Rise with US

11:15 - 12 p.m. – Panel 8: Digital Interaction & Social Marketing

12 - 1 p.m. – Lunch & Keynote: Dr. Clay Bolton - La Grange

1:15 - 2:15 p.m. – Research Presentations

2:25 - 2:50 p.m. – Panel 9: The Ultimate Start-Up - Building an MiLB Franchise
from Scratch

3 - 3:45 p.m. – Panel 10: Officiating

4 - 4:30 p.m. – Wrap-Up

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PANEL 1: YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

MODERATOR: PROF. CHRIS AMOS



Micheala Buriff

Liberty University Flames Club

Michaela Buriff is the Assistant Director of Member Services for Liberty University Athletics, where she plays a key role in enhancing the experience of Liberty Flames supporters and managing a wide range of membership services. Prior to this role, Michaela gained valuable experience as a Graduate Assistant with the Liberty University Flames Club, where she honed her skills in member relations and athletic event support. She holds a Bachelor's degree from Grace College and a Master's degree from Liberty University.



Titus Meeks

Winston-Salem Christian School

Titus graduated from Liberty University in 2024 with a BS in Sport Management: Sport Administration. During his time at Liberty, he worked for Flames Club as a game day ambassador in addition to working for Club Sports as an operations intern. Following graduation, Titus accepted a role at Winston-Salem Christian School, working as an assistant athletic director, and physical education teacher.



Josh Smith

Learfield Amplify - Duke University

Growing up in Baltimore Maryland, Josh Smith grew a passion for sports fans of all the local teams. While studying sport management at Liberty, Josh gained experience with working with game operations, recruiting and development experience. Upon graduation from Liberty with a B.S. and M.S. degrees in Sport Management, Josh got his start as a ticket sales and service consultant for Liberty University. After 2 1/2 years of the role Josh took a role with Learfield Amplify as the Manager of Premium Sales at Duke University in May of 2024.

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PANEL 2: PLAYER DEVELOPMENT & ENGAGEMENT

MODERATOR: DR. LAURA M. HATFIELD



Carrie Lynne Wolford
Director of Player Engagement
Virginia Tech Football

Carrie Lynne Wolford is in her third season as director of player engagement for the Hokies. Wolford leads the development and implementation of Tech's player development program for football. Previously, she served as assistant director of football operations at Virginia Tech in 2021. In that role, she communicated with the entire squad on a regular basis and assisted in coordinating a myriad of logistical tasks for the team, both at home and on the road.

Prior to joining Tech's football staff, Wolford spent four years as a member of Virginia Tech's Student-Athlete Support Services (SAASS) staff. She provided academic, personal and career support for members of the football team and Tech's spirit squads.



Maggie Hinson
Director of Transition/ Academics
Liberty Football

Maggie joined the Flames Football Staff in January 2023. She supports football student-athletes as they acclimate to life on The Mountain, pursue their academic and athletic goals, and transition into the next phases of their lives. Prior to Liberty, she worked in Student-Athlete Academic Services at Coastal Carolina University in multiple roles which culminated in her serving as the Associate Director. She has held various positions in academic services at Mississippi State, Mizzou, and Memphis.



Jenn Tull
Director of On-Campus Recruiting
Liberty Football

Jenn coordinates and executes all on-campus football recruiting visits to Liberty University. Her responsibilities include assisting in all aspects of on-campus recruiting, prospect communications and high school relations. She assists the Director of Recruiting Operations with all visits and scheduling prior to official visit weekends.

Prior to Liberty, Jenn worked as a Recruiting Student Worker for UGA Football and was promoted to Football Recruiting Analyst. In that role, she was supported the planning and preparation for all on-campus visits.

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PANEL 3: THE CURRENT STATE OF SPORT SPONSORSHIPS AND TRENDS FOR 2025 AND BEYOND

MODERATOR: DR. LANCE C. HATFIELD



Mike Mitchell

Director of Global Partnerships

Mike is a Director for Global Partnerships with the Oak View Group (OVG) and is based at the First Horizon Coliseum/Greensboro Complex/Tanger Center in Greensboro, NC. Mike started with IMG College over 15 years ago at the Southern Conference office in Spartanburg, SC before joining the company in Greensboro to head the property. Despite the various mergers with WME, ISP, Endeavor and Learfield, he's held the same office throughout.

He oversees both corporate partnerships and premium seating at the venues. With OVG taking over management of the various venues, his role and responsibilities have grown as he helped sign First Horizon Bank as the first-ever naming rights partner for the Coliseum and now welcoming a new ECHL franchise. The sudden and increased growth has led to the hiring of additional staff over the coming months. Mike lives in Greensboro with his wife Sara, daughter Juliana and dogs Eeyore, Clifford, and Poppy.



Scott Sonju

Managing Director for Trailrunner Sports

Scott is the Managing Director for Trailrunner Sports. He is a seasoned sports executive with experience in professional basketball, baseball, soccer, rugby, and cricket. He was a two-time selection for the Dallas Business Journal "40 Under Forty" and has helped launch several businesses and ministries.

Last year Scott was recruited to TrailRunner International to help develop and launch TrailRunner Sports, a joint venture with Legends. He started his career with the Dallas Mavericks before becoming president of Minor League Baseball's Frisco RoughRiders. Scott and Amy have been married for 28 years and have 4 kids, including a son at Liberty.

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

FACILITATOR: DR. LANCE C. HATFIELD

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4TH



Scott Sonju

Managing Director, Adjunct Professor, Entrepreneur, Husband, Father

Scott Sonju is an entrepreneur, consultant, seasoned executive, husband, and father. Prior to helping launch strategic advisory firm TrailRunner Sports, Scott was President of Neltex Sports, a firm that develops and operates various sports-related businesses. Scott was also the founding president of the Dallas Jackals, an expansion team of Major League Rugby.

For 11 years Scott served as President of the Frisco RoughRiders, one of the most successful operations in minor league baseball history. The RoughRiders were named league "Organization of the Year" in 2005 and 2010. During Scott's tenure, the RoughRiders led all 30 Double-A teams in attendance and revenues for 11 consecutive seasons and were known for their top-notch customer service, creative promotions, commitment to community, and leadership development.

Immediately prior to joining the RoughRiders, Scott earned his MBA at Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management. He also earned a B.A. from Texas A&M University. Prior to business school, Scott helped run a Christian family resort called CAMP-of-the-WOODS. While there he founded the LIFT Program, a year-long leadership development and discipleship program for gap year students. Scott started his career at the Dallas Mavericks in ticket sales.

Scott is also an adjunct professor at Southern Methodist University and a two-time selection for the Dallas Business Journal's "40 Under Forty". Scott and Amy have been married for 28 years and have 4 children, including a son at Liberty.

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POSTER SESSION

MODERATOR: DR. CLARK ZEALAND

Poster Presentations (Completed Works)

- Fans Come First - A History of Dodger Stadium Promotions
 - Joey Elledge, Ph.D., Erskine College, Liberty University Adjunct
- The Relationship Between Employee Perceptions of Supervisors' Servant Leadership and Culture in U.S. Parks and Recreation Organizations
 - Joey Elledge, Ph.D., Erskine College, Liberty University Adjunct
- Student Attendance: Influence of Promotions
 - Faith Bouch, Samuel Corona, Benjamin Cox, Ashton Jones
- The Connection Between Promotion and Attendance
 - Jordan Stackpole, Gracie Nichols, Michael Williams, Yung Shang Lin
- Safetyism in Outdoor Adventure: A Content Analysis of Antithetical Perspectives on Risk and Freedom in Nature-Based Activities
 - Clark Zealand, Ph.D. and Elijah Kester

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POSTER SESSION**MODERATOR: DR. CLARK ZEALAND****Poster Presentations by Liberty University Students (Works in Progress).**

- A Comparative Study of Leadership Styles of U.S. Olympic Swimming Head Coaches
 - Stephanie Barnes
- Building Bigger and Better Football Stadiums: The Reality Behind Public Endorsement of New Stadiums in Local Communities
 - Delaney Austin, Michael Bizerra, Lauren Landry, Rena Musgrave
- The Application of the Age Cliff Regarding the Running Back Position
 - Aidan Ayer, Brenden Harrison, Preston Lang, Mark McCoy
- NIL vs. Gender: Inequity in Revenue for Collegiate Sports
 - Paige Bachman, Savannah Jessee, Rachel Craine, and Phillip Doss
- Key Success Factors for Late-Round Wide Receiver Picks
 - Joshua Bonilla, Graham Klause, Taylor Bates, Reid Brennan, Nathan Kelsey
- Impact of Social Media Comments on Anxiety and Depression Among Top-Followed NCAA Division I Student-Athletes
 - Josiah Boot, Erin Meacham, Reagan Hicks, Kaelyn Haldi
- The Impacts of Mass Tourism During the 2024 Olympics on the Quality of Life for Paris Residents
 - Maya Bowen, Kara Parker, Mary Richey, Ryann Upham

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POSTER SESSION

MODERATOR: DR. CLARK ZEALAND

Poster Presentations by Liberty University Students (Works in Progress)

- The Revenue Impact of Pet Friendly Policies on Hotel Performance: A Comparative Analysis
 - Megan Cairns, Mary Dulaney, Sarah Robosky, and Liz Carlson
- Investigation of Professional Sport Manager Attributes
 - Kenneth Seibert, Grayson Howell, Tanner Kullman, and Kevin Day
- Impact of Concussions on NFL Players' Contract Value upon Return to Play
 - Lauren Harder, Charles Barkow, Sam Hackney, Owen Bevard, Joseph Carter
- Effects on NIL on Recruitment Practices in NCAA Division I Football, Basketball, and Baseball
 - Kian Haynes, Nathan Anderson, Matt Heckler, Brayden Smedberg
- Analyzing the Decline of NFL Running Backs: Factors & Implications
 - Walker Johnson, Faith Kanych, Ben Ockerman, Matt Rivero
- The Relationship between Social Media Analytics of Popular Female Athletes and Viewership in their Sports
 - Kasmira Mack, Caitlin Monahan, Alli Schober, Brenna Rae Bentley

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PANEL 4: THE ROLE OF DMOS AND SPORTS AUTHORITIES IN SPORT TOURISM

MODERATOR: DR. LANCE C. HATFIELD



Will Berryman

GM of the Henrico Sports and Events Center/ASM Global

Will Berryman is a dedicated professional specializing in event and operations management, with a focus on sports venues and recreation. Currently, he is the General Manager of the Henrico Sports and Events Center/ASM Global, where he leads a team to execute regional, state, and national sporting events. Will has extensive experience in budget management, compliance, and team leadership.

Will earned his Bachelor's degree in Sport Administration from Radford University. In addition he earned his Master's degree in Sport Administration from Old Dominion University.



Megan Hazzard

Manager of Business Development and Event Operations

Megan is the Manager of Business Development and Event Operations for the Henrico Sports & Entertainment Authority. This newly formed authority oversees sports tourism and facility growth and development for Henrico County to drive economic impact to the county. She manages large-scale events and tournaments at the Henrico Sports and Events Center at VCC, which opened in November 2023, and will be involved with the GreenCity eco-district development anchored by the new 17,000-seat arena scheduled to open in 2028.

Prior to her current position, Megan started her career as a sales manager for the Greater Richmond Convention Center. She then moved on to NASCAR's Richmond Raceway for 13 years, ending her tenure there as Director of Events before coming to her current position. Megan is a graduate of Clemson University with a Bachelor's degree in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management specializing in Events and Business Administration.



Danish Saadat

National Sales & Marketing Manager at Virginia Tourism Corporation

Danish Saadat has served as the National Sales & Marketing Manager at Virginia Tourism Corporation since January of 2020, heading up the Sports Virginia initiative. In his role, Danish markets the state of Virginia as a premier sports tourism destination to sports event organizers. Prior to his role at Virginia Tourism Corporation, Danish was a Convention and Sports Services Manager at Richmond Region Tourism from 2018-2020 working directly with sports event organizers in assisting them with hosting their events in the Richmond Region.

A proud graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University's Center for Sport Leadership Graduate Program in 2014, Danish worked as a Graduate Assistant with the Communications and Ticket Office at VCU Athletics during his time at VCU. Currently Danish serves on the Center for Sports Leaderships Alumni Advisory Board.

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PANEL 5: HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ADMINISTRATION

MODERATOR: DR. DANA HOWARD



Jonathan Mitchell has served in various roles in athletics for the past 10 years. He served as the Athletics Coordinator for Bedford County Parks and Recreation from 2016-2019. He was hired as LCA's Middle School/Assistant Athletic Director in 2019. In 2024, Jonathan was promoted to LCA's Athletic Director.

Jonathan was a graduate of Liberty University (Sport Management '15). During his time at LU, Mitchell spent time as an intern for the Athletic Department at LCA under Coach Rocco in 2011 and again in 2014-2015 school year. In 2015, Mitchell helped coordinate the Impact Sports League at Thomas Road Baptist Church while completing his degree at LU. Mitchell became a registered athletic administrator in April of 2020 from the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association and continues to pursue his certified athletic administrator certification.

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FIFA WORLD CUP 2026

MODERATOR: DR. LAURA M. HATFIELD

Daniel Rodriguez

Sports and Events Industry Professional

Daniel is a Liberty University alum who attended during the years of 2009-2013 and 2016-2018. He attained both his Bachelors and Masters in Sport Management. His early years kickstarted his career in sports having worked in the University Ticket office. This experience led him to working with the San Diego Padres on two different occasions as a Digital Specialist and Ticket Operations Manager. Post-Graduate school, he skated into the hockey industry as an Event and Promotions Coordinator with The Rinks (under the Anaheim Ducks Ownership umbrella).



Post-covid, Daniel jumped into the muddy waters of Tough Mudder and Spartan Race. He worked as both as a Festival Event staff and Festival Manager during his tenure with the companies from 2021-2024. As a Festival Manager, he managed up to 7 full-time staff and 30-50 volunteers in multiple functional areas. Coordinated with multiple internal and external entities to create seamless events throughout the year. This experience and development of connections opened the door in 2022 to travel to Qatar for the FIFA World Cup 2022.

In Qatar, Daniel was a Deputy Manager of Load Zone Operations for TMS Global at the bus hub located in Souq Waqif. During operations, his team serviced over 100,000 spectators attending 8 different stadiums. Him and his team of 14 provided classroom and hands-on training with 92 new staff members who had little to no event experience. Throughout the duration of the games, he managed a team of 22 supervisors and ground staff.

Since leaving Spartan/Tough Mudder, Daniel has joined the FIFA World Cup 2026 Canada, Mexico, and the United States as a Manager, Workforce for the United States operations headquartered in Miami. This role will consist of helping develop and implement workforce planning and operations strategies for both the FIFA Club World Cup in 2025 and the FIFA World Cup in 2026. Working in close collaboration with numerous Functional Areas throughout the planning and operational process to forecast tournament requirements and needs. During Tournament Time, Daniel's role will become fully operational, delivering critical workforce operations for one or more of the tournament venues.

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PANEL 6: DIVISION III COACHES

MODERATOR: PROF. CHRIS AMOS



Kara Matthews

Head Women's Volleyball Coach, Randolph College

Kara Matthews joined the Randolph College coaching staff in the summer of 2012 as an assistant coach and was promoted to head coach before the 2014 season. She added the title of Senior Woman Administrator in September 2019. In Randolph's record-setting 2014 season, Matthews coached the WildCats to the most wins since 1997 and the program's first ODAC tournament appearance since 2006. Matthews came to the WildCats after a four-year stint with Lynchburg College, where she was a four-year letter-winner.



Hilliary Scott

Head Basketball Coach, University of Lynchburg

Hilliary Scott is the Head Men's Basketball Coach at the University of Lynchburg. Scott has amassed more than 180 wins and led the program to its first NCAA Division III tournament victory and its first appearance in the top 25 poll. In his tenure, Lynchburg has had 21 all-conference selections and two ODAC players of the year. Before entering the coaching ranks, Scott played professional basketball in Europe for two teams. He also worked for five seasons as an assistant coach at East Tennessee State University (1998-2003) and was an assistant coach at Penn State University from 2003-08.

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PANEL 7: RISE WITH US

MODERATOR: DR. LAURA M. HATFIELD

Mickey Guridy

Senior Associate AD for Event Management, Facilities and Personnel/Chief Diversity Officer, Liberty Athletics

Mickey Guridy has 30-plus years of service at Liberty University. Guridy oversees various areas of the athletics department, human resources, event management, athletic facilities, and football scheduling. He also serves as the sport supervisor for men's basketball and baseball.

He works closely with the University administration to ensure facilities are maintained and upgraded. During his tenure, he has been heavily involved in the construction of multiple new athletics facilities.

Todd Patulski

Senior Associate AD for Finance and Business Strategy/Chief Financial Officer, Liberty Athletics

Patulski is charged with overseeing all financial aspects of the Liberty University Athletics Department, including planning, implementing, managing and controlling all financial-related activities for the department.

Patulski, who is a member of the athletics department Senior Staff, also works closely with the university's executive leadership team to ensure the financial direction of the athletics department remains in line with the purpose and mission of Liberty University.

Amanda Rider

Associate Athletic Director for Ticket Operations and Sales (Football)

Amanda Rider was promoted to her current position, Associate Athletic Director for Ticket Operations and Sales in January 2024. Her responsibilities include coordinating all ticket operations for all home regular season ticketed NCAA events for football. Rider also coordinates away game and postseason ticket operations for all NCAA sports, manages contracts and data for multiple systems.

Rider has been an active member of the National Association of Athletic Ticket Sales and Operations (NAATSO) since 2016. She served as the NAATSO Association President during the 2023-24 school year.



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PANEL 8: DIGITAL INTERACTION AND SOCIAL MARKETING

MODERATOR: DR. LAURA M. HATFIELD

Karlie Smith

**Director - Digital Engagement and Social Promotion,
Coastal Athletic Association**



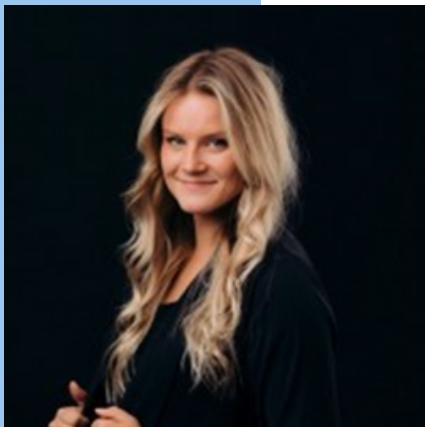
For the past three years, Karlie Smith has served as the Director of Digital Engagement and Social Promotion for the Coastal Athletic Association. In her role at the CAA, Smith is involved in all aspects of the conference's video production department, including on-air work. She also assists and creates content for the conference's social media outlets.

Smith brings a variety of experience in the television industry to the CAA. She has worked as an Operations Manager for the NFL on FOX and other Fox Sports contests. Since 2018, she has served in play-by-play, analyst, in-arena host, and sideline reporting roles on SEC Network+, ESPN+, and FloSports for a variety of sports. She also worked as a two-year digital production assistant at the University of Georgia.

Smith is an active member of the Uncommon Sports Group. She graduated magna cum laude from East Carolina University in 2018 with a degree in journalism. She was a four-year starter for the East Carolina softball team.

Cassidy Paxton

Senior Producer - Athletics Creative, Liberty Athletics



Cassidy is an accomplished creative professional with a strong background in sports media, currently serving as the Manager of Athletic Creative Services at Liberty University. She leads visual storytelling and branding efforts for Liberty's athletic department, blending strategic design with impactful photography.

Prior to this role, Cassidy served as a Senior Photographer and Designer at Liberty, elevating the athletic department's visual identity. She brings experience from Baylor University, where she worked as the Assistant Director of Digital Media, specializing in digital content for athletics. Her journey in athletic creative services began at Liberty, first in Campus Recreation Marketing and later as a Social Media and Marketing Specialist for Liberty Intramurals.

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

FACILITATOR: DR. LANCE C. HATFIELD

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5TH



Experiential Learning: Combining an Introduction to Sports Management Course with a Sports Management Student Club to plan, execute, and evaluate a Forty-Year-Old Local Sports Event

Jorge Fragoso, Kyle Moore, Brett Gwinn, and Dr. Clay Bolton, Ed.D. (Advisor, LaGrange College)

A Sports Management Student Club combined with an Introduction to Sports Management Course to teach students vertical leadership development, including planning, executing, and evaluating a fundraising event that has been in the local community for four decades, will be discussed!

McDonald and Spence (2016) discussed how experiential learning impacts student lateral and vertical development. Indeed, the sports management literature fully explores students “learning from doing” by hosting three-on-three basketball competitions, softball events, and even golf tournaments. Likewise, most sports management programs highlight volunteer opportunities with local parks and recreation organizations, interscholastic and intercollegiate competitions, bowl games, national championship events, professional team games, road races, marathons, and pickleball tournaments (Hardin, Bemiller, & Pate, 2010). However, there appears to be a gap in the research examining partnerships with a student-led club and an academic course.

The purpose of this oral presentation is to learn from students who are part of a Division III institution, (members or officers) from the college's sports management club, currently taking or have taken the Introduction to Sports Management course that jointly runs the 40th annual Tom Duckett Memorial Golf Event, held each year during Homecoming Weekend in LaGrange, Georgia. Students will discuss roles, tasks, and outcomes to present a best practice!

RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

MODERATOR: DR. CLARK ZEALAND

Servant Leadership Coaching

Marty Durden, Ed.D. (Shorter University)

Servant leadership is a topic of discussion in our society but widely misunderstood by educators. While our colleagues have a vague comprehension of servant leading, educators view it as a chain of service projects. One reason for this conundrum is because popular servant leadership has a sparse body of research to validate its effectiveness in the world of athletic coaching.

The original purpose of this study was to research the motivational effects of servant leadership coaching on high school student-athletes and to provide functional information for coaches and educators regarding the positive results of the servant leadership coaching philosophy.

The research on this topic is unique as it was the first academic study regarding the motivational effects of servant leadership coaching. This philosophy has become a topic of discussion throughout the coaching fraternity and begs research upon the transferability of this leadership style to the profession of athletic coaching. It is reasonable to believe the body of evidence indicates that servant leadership is a relevant model for leaders and possesses the potential to positively influence a nationwide audience of young people.

The ongoing research utilizes a simple Likert scale to gather information from student athletes for ages high school through college. The students in the sample are from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. The results of the surveys and interviews indicated that the servant leader behaviors of trust, competence, affection, fairness, and empowerment possess significant inherent motivational power that resonates with Millennials and Generation Z. Results indicated a significant link with higher levels of effort and attention.

The findings indicate that the concept of servant leadership coaching has a positive effect on the motivational levels of student-athletes. The information demonstrates that this audience values trust above all other coaching traits. The aim of the study is to present a quantitative list of the servant leadership constructs that will provide functional information for professional educators and coaches to gain greater insight into the value of servant leadership behaviors that result in increased player motivation of team members.

RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

MODERATOR: DR. CLARK ZEALAND

Professional Development for Sport Management Students: Challenges and Opportunities

Rachel Elms, Ph.D. (Tarleton State University)

Sport management programs have long viewed internships and practicum experiences as the cornerstone for students' academic preparation (Bell & Countiss, 1993). Furthermore, sport management programs have a history of incorporating experiential learning opportunities into the curriculum to improve students' applicable and transferable skills (Faure et al., 2021). While both internships and experiential learning hold value for students, professional development promotes student-career readiness and is linked to student learning (Reeves, 2010). Professional development includes career training and continued education to build on these applicable skills. The purpose of this work is to present an overview of the Professional Development (PD) Point Program at Tarleton State University. This presentation will focus on the implementation of this program which requires that all sport management majors obtain 15 professional development credentials to support their career goals while providing a foundation for the creation of their professional portfolio and resume. Students can complete a variety of points in six varying categories which include research, service, fitness, leadership, memberships, and certifications. This presentation will address current challenges in addition to posing potential revisions for enhancing the effectiveness of the program while keeping current with national trends. It will also include recommendations for the implementation of similar programs which may involve (a) methods for boosting credibility and confidence through network-building; (b) credentials for career advancement within the industry; and (c) opportunities for enhanced leadership skills.

PANEL 9: THE ULTIMATE START-UP

MODERATOR: DR. LANCE C. HATFIELD

Tyson Jeffers

What Does It Take to Start a MiLB Team?

Tyson is the General Manager for the MiLB's newest team – the Hub City Spartanburgers, the High-A affiliate of the Texas Rangers. Born and raised in Mississippi, Tyson attended Mississippi State University. While at Mississippi State, he received his undergraduate degree in Risk Management, Insurance, and Financial Planning and then earned his MBA.

After graduation, Tyson accepted a job with the St. Paul Saints, currently the Triple-A Affiliate of the Twins, in St. Paul, MN. With the Saints, Tyson held many sales-focused roles, including Ticket Sales Manager, Corporate Partnerships Activation Manager, Ticket Sales Manager, Director of Ticket Sales and Director of Corporate Partnerships. During Tyson's 8 years with the Saints, he was part of the staff that helped build the Saints' current ballpark, CHS Field, which was a \$65M ground-up build that opened in 2015.

In pre-COVID 2020, Tyson moved to New York State to become the Assistant General Manager for the Hudson Valley Renegades, currently the High-A Affiliate of the New York Yankees. Tyson remained the AGM of the Renegades for 2 years before being elevated to General Manager of the club. While with the Renegades, Tyson helped in securing \$25M+ to be utilized to a revitalization project of the 30-year-old ballpark. The project included fully replacing the field and outfield wall, renovating the visiting clubhouse spaces, building a new home clubhouse, and expanding the capacity to include a new premium Club space and new group areas. This project was completed before the start of the 2024 season.

After almost four years with the Renegades, Tyson was tapped to start up the Spartanburgers located in Spartanburg, SC. In Nov 2024, Tyson moved to Spartanburg as the sole employee of the organization to build the staff and manage the construction of their \$120M ballpark project. In the last year, Tyson has helped build the staff to 15 full-time staff members, launch the team's brand/identity, and is helping prepare the team for their inaugural season in 2025.



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PANEL 10: OFFICIATING

MODERATOR: DR. DANA HOWARD



Jonathan Kirk
Football Official

Jonathan Kirk began officiating youth and high school sports in 2011. In 2013 he began officiating Division III football with the Old Dominion Athletic Conference & the USA South Athletic Conference. Since 2020, he has been officiating Division I football. In addition to being selected for numerous post-season assignments, two of his more memorable experiences on the field include officiating a game through extreme weather, with a wind chill of -15 degrees, and officiating the 2023 139th playing of "The Game" Harvard vs Yale in front of 55K fans at the Yale Bowl. He is currently on staff with the American Athletic Conference. Jonathan is married to his wife, Amanda, and has two boys.



Brian Wallace
Basketball Official

Brian is an accomplished women's college basketball referee with nine years of experience across multiple conferences, including Coastal Athletic, Sun Belt, and Big South, to name a few. He has officiated postseason games in Division I and multiple NCAA Division III tournaments, including the 2019 Final Four. Brian is married to his wife, Danielle, and has two daughters.



Jason Page
Basketball Official

Born and raised in Lynchburg, VA. Attended LCA and Liberty University.
Fall 1996 - Began officiating middle school & JV Basketball.

Winter 1999 - Worked first Varsity game.

Summer 2000 - Began attending referee camps for more exposure to higher levels.

Winter 2001 - Began working in Division II (CVAC) & Division III (ODAC) conference for NCAA Men's Basketball.

Winter 2004 - Began working in Division I Men's Basketball (ASUN, OVC, Big South)

Since 2004, he has worked in multiple conferences each year, currently on staff in the American, Atlantic 10, Sun Belt, Southern, Coastal, Big South, ASUN, USA-South, and ODAC.

Officiating has afforded him the opportunity to see places he may have never seen, meet people he may have never met, and have experiences that have impacted him for life. Jason is married to his wife, Tarah, and has a daughter and a son.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Department of Hospitality & Sport Management

Special thanks to faculty and graduate student assistants in the Department of Hospitality & Sport Management. The Sport Leadership Summit requires broad-based contributions and does not happen without a team effort. The dedication and expertise each team member brings to make this event a success is greatly appreciated. The collaborative spirit and commitment ensure a meaningful experience for all attendees.

University Events

Special thanks to the University Events staff. The success of the Sport Leadership Summit was only possible because of their collaborative efforts and support. The team contributed invaluable ideas, answered questions, provided recommendations, and offered solutions that helped make this event a success in a fantastic space.

Hospitality Students

EMGT 420 Conference & Meeting Management
SETM 497 Business Summits

Special thanks to the hospitality management students enrolled in these courses for your work on the Sport Leadership Summit. Your creative ideas, logistics management, and guest service are greatly appreciated.