

Communication Students Participate in NBC Sports Internship Program

by Adrainne Hutto

This year two Communication Department students participated in the 2020-21 Women's Sports Foundation and NBC Sports Group Female Student-Athlete Mentoring Program. The purpose of this mentorship is to help student-athletes to improve their leadership and communication skills through the help of mentors in similar fields.

Gemma Perez is a senior with a concentration in media production and a minor in digital media. Perez explained how she was always interested in working in the entertainment industry, as members of her family were in the same career field.

"I always wanted to kind of do what they did, but different, and of course being an athlete and being involved in sports media production is like a huge part of the entertainment industry. So I just really wanted to know what went on behind the camera as well as potentially being in front of the camera one day," Perez said.

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Perez was informed about the program through her coach who had heard about it from Manhattan College's Athletic Director Marianne Reilly, who shared the information with several other coaches. She detailed how she applied to the program in just one night, having to provide a letter of recommendation from her coach and answer a list of questions. After waiting nearly a month and a half, Perez thought she was not accepted.

"I honestly didn't think I got in but I was really happy that I did," Perez said. "It's a whole nation-wide program so [there are] female student athletes who go to so many different schools, so I'm proud to have even gotten selected."

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the students were unable to attend events in person. Instead, mentees participate in different meetings, guest lectures, and resume building workshops. Since it is harder to do the level of work the mentees would typically do in an online format, the program is more development-based. Additionally, mentees are paired with a mentor who is an NBC employee in different fields like finance or marketing. Perez explains that, "It's so great because you can really just talk about anything."

It was her experience as a student athlete that helped Perez fit into her role as a mentee with NBC sports. "It's helped me in really every single aspect, especially because I play a team sport," Perez said. "These people I don't even know, I've never even met them in person, but to be able to build that relationship and connection through sports translates into networking."

Perez explained how, with the help of her mentor she was able to gain insight into the sports media industry. "...One thing my mentor and I have done is she has set up separate Zoom calls with different colleagues



and people who work with her in different fields,” Perez said.

“My mentor and I are currently working on interview skills,” Perez stated. “She definitely helped me navigate and try to have a flowing interview in the right sort of way, because it’s amazing to hear from people who hire other people and to see their perspective on what a good interviewee looks like.”

Elyse Holmes is a junior communication student with a concentration in sports media production and a minor in digital media arts. Holmes is a coxswain for Manhattan’s D1 Women’s Rowing Team. Holmes, who was originally uncertain about her major, explained that, “It wasn’t until I began to work as a production assistant for basketball games that I found my passion in the sport media niche.”

Similar to Perrez, Holmes heard about the NBC Sports Mentorship through her rowing coach, Alex Canale.

“He had texted a bunch of athletes on my team letting us know that there was a mentorship program with WSF x NBC Sports and I knew I had to apply. All I really had to do was submit my resume, answer some typical application questions and submit a letter of recommendation,” Holmes said.

Holmes explained how impactful the program was to her being able to make significant contacts with prominent figures in her future field of study. “Within the first couple of weeks, I was connected to Rebecca Chatman, Vice President and Coordinating Producer of the Olympics, and had the opportunity to have a long conversation about how she got there and any information she was willing to share on how to begin breaking into such a competitive line of work,” Holmes said.

This has helped her to begin to grow and find footing in her career so early into her college experience. Holmes has begun to make connections that will benefit her throughout her adult life.

Similar to Perez, Holmes’s experience as a student-athlete has helped her to prepare for this role. It was her position as a student-athlete that was her inspiration for continuing a career in sports outside of college.

“Being a coxswain puts a lot of pressure on an individual, and I’ve learned to thrive in leadership positions because of it. Many people don’t understand the position I fill in the boat, but being a coxswain requires a high level of responsibility, accountability, leadership, communication and confidence.” Holmes elaborated. “To be good at this position, I find that one has to be a student of the sport, because no one really tells you how to do your job well. All of these aspects have prepared me for my mentorship and future internships.”

Holmes explained how the program helped her to understand the impact of networking. She realized how important it is to begin networking now, rather than waiting until she is actively in her field of study. She explained that, “From the point we began the mentorship to now, I definitely have come into contact with some amazing men and women who are willing and happy to help young newcomers like me get our foot in the door.”

“Broadcasting out of two trucks with different systems for a week straight was an amazing experience, and I was able to make some great connections while there. I had so much fun getting to work on something I am passionate about –Elyse Holmes

“The best piece of advice I can give to someone is to be open to all opportunities. Look outside your specific field, and be open to different locations,” Holmes said. “Exploration is key when starting internships, because it shows you different work dynamics and how you function in each position.” ★

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These two athletes are prime examples of the kind of women excelling in the communication department. With the drive given to them through their experience as student-athletes and the knowledge and skills they gained as communication majors, Holmes and Perez stand out among the student body.