Distributed by UW News Service, June 9, 2025

Link to original story: <https://www.uwlax.edu/news/posts/a-golden-opportunity/>

**A golden opportunity**

**Sport Management students, faculty gain valuable experience at NFL Draft**

Written by UW-La Crosse University Marketing & Communications

UW-La Crosse was well-represented at the NFL Draft in Green Bay April 24-26, with students and faculty from UWL’s Sport Management program volunteering for all three days of the NFL’s signature offseason event.

The group, led by Assistant Professor of Exercise & Sport Science [Sam Schmidt](https://www.uwlax.edu/profile/sschmidt/), '13, tackled various responsibilities around Lambeau Field, including instructing people for the “red carpet” walk and field goal kicks, attending to needs of former players and special guests, and assisting with the Draft Experience football festival.

According to Schmidt, the energy among the crowd and volunteers remained high despite cold, wet weather throughout much of the Draft, which drew about 600,000 visitors — more than double the expected attendance — to a city of just over 100,000.

Schmidt was joined by Sport Management students Elise Bauer, Cortney Chard, Kylee Goodrich, Ella Kacmarynski, Tanner Kubeny, Owen Liefker, Lawrence Riehl, Jesus Santiago and Ryan Takerian.

One highlight for the group was volunteering at the Draft Experience, held mostly in the Titletown district adjacent to Lambeau Field. There, students welcomed guests and took photos, assisted children playing in the Play 60 area, timed adults running the 40-yard dash against (virtual) pros, and scanned children and families into the playground area.

For Schmidt, the Draft provided a (green and) golden opportunity to bring students to a major national event — one with strong connections to the content students [learn in the classroom](https://www.uwlax.edu/academics/exercise-and-sport-science/sport-management/).

When it was announced in May 2023 that Green Bay would be hosting the draft, Schmidt immediately began looking for ways to get involved. He filled out a volunteer form and reached out to UWL alumni working with the Packers or with connections to the Packers.

One of these alumni was [Brad Toll, ’85](https://www.uwlax.edu/news/posts/landing-the-nfl-draft/), president and CEO of Discover Green Bay, which was heavily involved with planning and operations for the Draft.

Toll helped Schmidt and his students get signed up — a small gesture that led to a memorable weekend for UWL’s future sport management professionals.

“I always talk about the importance of networking and using your network to gain opportunities to add to the resume or grow in some capacity,” Schmidt says. “So I was pleased to practice what I preach for an unforgettable opportunity for our program.”

**Sport Management at UWL**

Sport managers help plan, organize and implement the nearly $500 billion sport industry. As one of two public universities in Wisconsin that offer a Sport Management major, UWL’s program is focused on providing practical experiences, teaching best practices and building conceptual skills for students to become leaders in the sport industry.

UWL’s reputable program and strong alumni network have helped graduates find successful careers in a highly competitive sports industry for more than three decades, including positions with the Green Bay Packers, Wisconsin Badgers, Milwaukee Brewers and many more.