



FIRED UP

feature



What are CMU Sport Management students up to?



WHAT IS THE FIRED UP FEATURE?

The Fired Up Feature is a newsletter highlighting the people, stories, and experiences that make Central Michigan University (CMU) Sport Management special. Each edition will showcase student accomplishments, alumni career journeys, department events, and opportunities within the sport industry. The goal is to keep the CMU Sport Management community connected and showcase what Chippewas are up to both on campus and beyond.

WHY CMU SPORT MANAGEMENT?

Choosing CMU means becoming part of a program where learning goes beyond the classroom. Students have opportunities to gain real-world experience through athletics, events, internships, student organizations, and other hands-on opportunities that help prepare them for careers in the sport industry.

Just as importantly, CMU helps students build relationships that can last throughout their careers. With connections to alumni and professionals across the sport industry, students can meet people from a variety of organizations, career paths, and locations. These relationships can open doors to new experiences and opportunities both during college and after graduation.



Learn.

Lead.

Experience.

FIRE UP!

WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND CAMPUS IN SPORT MANAGEMENT?

SPORT MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

The Sport Management Association (SMA) at Central Michigan University is a student-led organization focused on helping students develop professionally and personally in the field of sport management. SMA offers networking opportunities with industry professionals, access to valuable resources, and leadership roles to help students build key skills. Members can also take advantage of conference and travel opportunities, connect with alumni for mentorship and career advice, and engage in social activities to foster community and collaboration. Overall, SMA provides a well-rounded experience that supports career growth and personal development for students pursuing careers in sport management. Click on the SMA logo to see what they are up to!



**INTERESTED IN JOINING?
CLICK THE EMAIL BELOW**

✉ SMA@CMICH.EDU

PROFESSOR SPOTLIGHT



Dr. Daniel Ballou

Meet Dr. Ballou!

Dr. Daniel Ballou is a Sport Management professor at Central Michigan University and a Kansas State graduate. He teaches undergraduate and graduate courses, with graduate-level finance being his favorite. He brings his own financial experiences into the classroom, focusing on practical lessons like budgeting, managing money, and investing.

When asked why he became a professor, Dr. Ballou joked, “For June, July, and August.” More seriously, his decision was shaped by years of hands-on experience in the sport industry, producing and working sporting events. His favorite part of teaching is the relationships he builds with students, which have kept him in the profession.

Dr. Ballou has seen major changes in the sport industry, particularly the growing amounts of money surrounding athletes, coaches, teams, and events. He believes this growth has created both new opportunities and challenges within the industry.

He also prepares students for the realities of working in sport, emphasizing that it is rarely a traditional 9-to-5 career. His advice is simple: “You will get your hands dirty,” and success requires a willingness to work long and non-traditional hours.

Outside of CMU, Dr. Ballou enjoys long, challenging bike rides. His personal philosophy is equally straightforward: “Live an open-ended life... Freedom brother.”

WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND CAMPUS IN SPORT MANAGEMENT CONT.

EVENT SPOTLIGHT

SPORT MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP LECTURE SERIES

The PES 480 class is excited to welcome Dr. Jon Steinbrecher to Central Michigan University on Thursday, November 12, 2026, in Room 1020 of the Health Professions Building at 6:00pm. Hosted by the Sport Management Association, the event will focus on "Breaking into Sport" and will provide students with valuable insight and career advice from one of the sports industry's experienced leaders. Students of all experience levels are encouraged to attend and take advantage of this opportunity to learn about careers in the sports industry.

Dr. Steinbrecher currently serves as the Commissioner of the Mid American Conference (MAC). He previously served as commissioner of the Ohio Valley Conference from 2003-2009 and the Mid Continent Conference from 1994-2003. He is the longest tenured FBS commissioner and the longest tenured Division I commissioner across three conferences. Steinbrecher is also the only individual to have served as commissioner across all three NCAA Division I subdivisions: FBS, FCS, and Division I.

Scan the QR code or click the [link](#) to register today!



Dr. Jon Steinbrecher



WANT TO DONATE TO THE SPORT MANAGEMENT STUDENT SUCCESS FUND?

Help support the next generation of sport professionals by donating to the CMU Sport Management Student Success Fund! Your donation helps students gain hands on experiences, build professional connections, and take advantage of opportunities that prepare them for careers in the sports industry. Every contribution makes a difference and helps create opportunities that students may not otherwise have. Consider making a donation today and investing in the future of CMU Sport Management!

WHAT ARE SPORT MANAGEMENT STUDENTS UP TO?

CMU students are making their mark across the sport industry! From working in college athletics and gaining hands-on experience at sporting events to completing internships across the country, students are building valuable skills and connections beyond the classroom. These opportunities are helping students explore different areas of the industry, grow professionally, and prepare for successful careers in sport. Let's hear from some of them!

Meet Jake!

Jake is a senior in CMU's Accelerated Master's program studying Sport Management with a minor in Sport Analytics while pursuing a master's degree in Sport Administration. Jake has spent the past four years working with CMU Football in recruiting, video and analytics, and equipment. Through these roles, he has gained valuable experience in event operations, communication, and time management, while also traveling with the team to games in New Mexico and Miami.

This summer, Jake worked as a Promotions Intern for the Rockford Rivets, gaining hands-on experience in fan engagement, event management, and teamwork. Working alongside 25 interns also allowed him to build valuable personal and professional connections. These experiences have helped Jake grow professionally and prepare for a future career in the sports industry.



Jake Herman



Brynne Birchmeier

Meet Brynne!

Brynne is a senior at Central Michigan University finishing her degree in Sport Management. Her passion for sports began at a young age through her involvement in athletics, especially wrestling, and she continues to help run tournaments, including the MHSAA Individual State Tournament at Ford Field.

Brynne has gained experience in collegiate athletics through CMU Athletic Events & Facilities and spent this past summer interning with the Great Lakes Loons as a Box Office Ticket Seller. After making a strong impression, she was offered an Account Executive position in Group Sales, where she manages ticket relationships, develops new business, and creates group experiences for schools, churches, youth organizations, and corporate groups.

While balancing a full-time position with college can be challenging, Brynne is proud to have secured a full-time role before graduation and credits CMU's Sport Management program and mentors for helping her grow personally and professionally.

WHAT ARE SPORT MANAGEMENT STUDENTS UP TO CONT.

Meet Gavin!

As a sophomore at Central Michigan University, Gavin has always had a strong interest in sports and wanted to explore the business and operational side of the industry. He works with CMU's Athletic Events & Facilities Operations, gaining hands-on experience with facility preparation, event operations, and collegiate sporting events. Gavin is also involved with the CMU women's basketball program as a practice player, allowing him to build connections within the athletic department and gain another perspective on collegiate athletics.

Through the Sport Management program, Gavin has already had opportunities to meet industry professionals, explore different career paths, and gain real-world experience. With more time left in the program, he hopes to continue developing his skills, expanding his network, and discovering where his interests can take him within the sports industry.



Gavin Sturos

INTERN SPOTLIGHT



Jaedyn Mallek

Meet Jaedyn!

Central Michigan University junior Jaedyn Mallek, a Sport Management major from Hemlock, Michigan, is gaining hands-on experience as an athletics intern at Mid Michigan College. Growing up with a father who served as an athletic director and participating in sports throughout high school inspired her to pursue a career in athletics.

At Mid Michigan College, Jaedyn assists with student-athlete study hall hours, website updates, academic progress reports, and eligibility requirements. Her internship has provided valuable experience in athletic administration while strengthening her time management, flexibility, and problem-solving skills. Although she originally considered sports communications, her experiences have sparked a growing interest in athletic management.

Outside her internship, Jaedyn is involved in a sorority and serves as a manager for CMU women's basketball. She hopes to one day work at an NCAA Division I Women's Basketball National Championship. Her advice to students seeking internships is to keep an open mind, explore different opportunities, and embrace every experience as a chance to learn and grow.

WHERE ARE CMU SPORT MANAGEMENT ALUMNI?

Our CMU Sport Management alumni are making an impact all across the United States—and even around the world! From professional sports and event management to marketing, administration, and beyond, our graduates are taking on exciting roles in the sports industry and beyond. In each newsletter, we'll catch up with some of our alumni to see where their careers have taken them, what they're working on now, and what's next for them. Let's see what our Chippewas are up to!



Sean Griffin
S.A.F.E. MANAGEMENT



Sean Griffin earned his Master of Arts in Sport Administration from Central Michigan University in spring 2017. His experience at CMU helped shape his passion for the sports industry and sparked his interest in event operations, facility management, and the people who make sporting events possible.

After graduating, Sean began his career in collegiate athletics as the Coordinator of Athletics at Minot State University before becoming the Athletics Facility Manager at Oakland University. Through these roles, he gained valuable experience in athletic administration, facility operations, and event management.

Sean currently serves as an Event Manager with S.A.F.E.

Management in Jacksonville, Florida, where he oversees security and guest services operations at EverBank Stadium, home of the Jacksonville Jaguars. His work focuses on creating safe, organized, and positive experiences for guests, staff, and event stakeholders.

Throughout his career, Sean has worked at a variety of major sporting and entertainment events, including the 2026 NCAA Final Four, Super Bowl LII, the Houston Rodeo at NRG Park, and Metallica's M72 World Tour at Raymond James Stadium. From his beginnings at Central Michigan to working behind the scenes at some of the country's largest venues, Sean has built a career centered around event management, venue operations, guest services, and creating memorable experiences in the sports and entertainment industry.

WHERE ARE CMU SPORT MANAGEMENT ALUMNI? CONT.



Karlee Clarambeau 
CHICAGO SKY

After graduating from Central Michigan University in December 2025, Karlee Clarambeau turned a CMU connection into an exciting career opportunity in Chicago. She is now a Account Executive with the Chicago Sky. While attending the 2025 Sport Management Association Conference (SMAC), Karlee met fellow CMU alum Jack Kalbas, who mentioned an Inside Sales position for the Chicago Sky that he thought would be a great fit. The two stayed in contact through graduation, ultimately leading Karlee to make the move to Chicago and begin their professional career.

Success came quickly. Karlee hit their monthly sales goal in her very first month and continued to reach that goal for the next three months. On September 9, she reached her yearly sales goal—an exciting milestone to achieve during their first year on the team.

One of the highlights of the year was having the opportunity to be part of WNBA All-Star Weekend in Chicago. For Karlee, seeing veterans and rookies come together and celebrating the women who have helped shape the league made the experience unforgettable.

“Getting this job right out of college was truly a blessing, and CMU was 100% the reason,” Karlee shared. Karlee’s journey is a great example of how the relationships and opportunities built at CMU can continue well beyond graduation.

Kristina Fusco shared how honored she was to be selected for the Alumni Spotlight and gave insight into her current internship with Fans First Entertainment, better known as Banana Ball. The opportunity has allowed her to travel across the country while gaining valuable experience in media, event operations, and sideline reporting. Working with all six teams in the league has been a highlight, with the scale of the events and broadcasts making the experience a dream come true.

Kristina credits Central Michigan University for preparing her for the opportunity through both her academic program and hands-on experiences. Serving as the main sideline reporter for ESPN+ broadcasts at CMU helped prepare her for this summer, including her first official ESPN and ABC appearances.

Banana Ball broadcasts typically reach 365,000–500,000+ viewers, with one broadcast averaging 1.2 million viewers—the highest in Banana Ball history. Kristina has also worked in front of sold-out crowds of up to 102,000 fans across football stadiums, MLB ballparks, and MiLB stadiums.

Looking toward the future, Kristina is excited to continue building a career in the sports industry. Her advice to students is to work hard, put yourself out there, and remember that being your own best advocate can help turn dreams into reality.



Kristina Fusco 
FANS FIRST ENTERTAINMENT

CAREER CENTRAL

WHAT IS CAREER CENTRAL?

Career Central is your place to explore career opportunities within the sport industry and begin preparing for your future. Here, you will have opportunities to connect with sport industry professionals, learn about potential jobs and internships, and discover ways to gain valuable experience.

Each month, this section will highlight career opportunities, professional development resources, networking opportunities, and other information that can help you take the next step toward your career goals.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND YOUR MOST UP-TO-DATE JOB POSTINGS?

Looking for your next opportunity in the sport industry? Whether you are searching for an internship, part-time position, or your first full-time job, there are several resources available to help you get started. Check out LinkedIn, TeamWork Online, ESPN/Disney Careers, NBA Careers, and JobsInSports for current job postings and opportunities across different areas of the sport industry by clicking the icons below.



DO YOU WANT TO WORK IN CMU ATHLETICS?

CMU Athletics is home to many professionals who can provide valuable insight and connections as you explore careers in the sport industry. Looking for a student position, internship, or other opportunity within CMU Athletics? These professionals can be great people to connect with and learn from. Justin Faur, Director of Facilities and Event Operations, brings experience in athletic event planning, operations, and facility management. Kaylee Landers, Associate Athletic Director for Marketing and Fan Engagement, focuses on promoting CMU Athletics and creating memorable experiences for fans. Zach Wilson, Assistant Athletic Director for Ticket Operations, oversees ticketing and event sales. Andrew Gerber, Assistant Athletic Director for Multimedia, works in digital media and content within collegiate athletics. Select the Industry Professionals photo to learn more about each professional and their career path!



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WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE WORLD OF SPORTS?

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF: WILL IT CHANGE TO 24 TEAMS?

Yahoo Sports Ross Dellinger says CFP leaders met outside of Chicago this week, and the consensus is that doubling the current 12-team field feels like a foregone conclusion. One stakeholder told Dellinger quote, "If we can get a decent deal, we're definitely going to 24." That deal is with ESPN, the playoffs' only TV partner. Their exclusive negotiating window closes October 9th, and after that the CFP can shop for the new games on the open market. The magic number is at least \$250 million. That's what conferences would have to give up by scrapping their championship games due to the extended playoff schedule. CFP executives have even sketched out a plan for the new format. ESPN reports that no votes were taken this week, but the CFP has until December 1st to lock in any changes for 2027.

MANCHESTER CITY SCANDAL

Manchester City was found guilty by an independent commission tied to serious breaches of financial rules over 9 seasons. The Premier League says Man City systematically broke their rules by using sham agreements with sponsors as part of a disguise funding scheme to artificially inflate their commercial earnings. They say City filed misstated accounts to conceal the true nature of their finances, which significantly breached Premier League and UEFA spending limits. The inflated revenue totaled 900 million English pounds, or just over one billion U.S. dollars, which allowed City to report higher revenues and spend more money on players, thus turning City into one of the most dominant clubs in the league now with 3 titles in those 9 seasons. Their punishment will come in a separate hearing, with possible penalties including fines, point deductions, relegations to a lower division or even expulsion from the league entirely.

Information compiled from Front Office Sports Today episodes published September 30 - October 2, 2026.

WNBA PLAYOFF FORMAT CRITICISM

The WNBA just began their post season, and the number one seed is already out. The #8 seeded New York Liberty swept the Minnesota Lynx, and it's the first time an #8 seed has beaten a #1 seed since the league moved to its current playoff format. This has now fueled criticism of the first rounds best of three format, which alternates home and away games. The playoff format received criticism from Las Vegas Aces head coach Becky Hammond and four-time All-Star Liberty guard Sabrina Ionescu. Any further attempts to add playoff games would be complicated by the league's collective bargaining agreement. The new CBA says that an increase in the number of possible playoff games must be accompanied by a proportional increase in player bonuses, and the league must consult with the players' union before finalizing any of the changes. Currently, each player on the championship team gets \$61,000, making the total bonus pool about \$1.4 million. Every round best of seven would push that to about \$2.4 million.

NFL RIO BREAKS TV RECORD

The Dallas Cowboys vs Baltimore Ravens game in Rio on September 27th averaged 24.9 million viewers, with the audience peaking at more than 30 million at 1 point, making it the most watched international NFL game ever.

NBA EXPANDS INTO VEGAS

The NBA is getting closer to adding a new team in Vegas and the price tag is enormous. ESPN's Shams Charania says the NBA is reviewing bids from three finalist groups for a Las Vegas expansion team. The price tag is coming between \$12 to \$13 billion for the franchise and a new arena. ESPN says the NBA will likely select the Vegas franchise before the likely Seattle franchise, as it is a hotter bidding market with higher offers, and Vegas needs a new arena built while Seattle already has Climate Pledge Arena ready to go.

CENTRAL MICHIGAN VS. WESTERN MICHIGAN BATTLE FOR THE VICTORY CANNON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17TH, 2026

Get ready for one of the most anticipated rivalry games in the Mid-American Conference. On Saturday, October 17th, the Broncos come to Mount Pleasant for the first weekend matchup at Kelly Shorts Stadium in a decade. Western Michigan enters the game as the reigning MAC champions, adding more importance to the rivalry.

As one of the greatest rivalry matchups in the state of Michigan, this game will give students, faculty, alumni, families, community members, and football fans across the state a chance to experience a major college football game day. This game will also serve as a celebration for CMU Athletics Hall of Fame Members.

The all-time record for Central Michigan University vs. Western Michigan University is 40 wins, 54 losses, and 2 ties, as the Broncos lead the all-time series in 2026. With the Victory Cannon on the line and the biggest rivalry game in the MAC, this game is going to provide an unmatched energy and atmosphere that CMU fans won't want to miss.



GAMEDAY SPOTLIGHT

Chippewas vs. Broncos

WANT TO BE FEATURED?

Know a student, alumni, faculty member, or event that deserves to be featured in the next Fired Up Feature? We want to hear from you! Whether it's an exciting internship, career accomplishment, upcoming event, student success, or a Chippewa making an impact in the sport industry, scan the QR code and share the story with us. We'll reach out to learn more and hopefully feature it in our next edition!

As always... FIRE UP CHIPS!

