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Community Service, NFL Style

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Community service, NFL style

While most people watch the Miami Dolphins on television, one Linfield College student experienced the thrill of an NFL game firsthand from the field.

Sarah Wendt '10 spent last summer immersed in football community relations through internships with the NFL's Miami Dolphins and the Billings Outlaws, a Montana Indoor Football League team and 2009 United Bowl Champion.

Wendt, a sociology and communication arts double major and avid football fan, called it a "one in a million opportunity."

"The two internships were both completely different," Wendt said.

In Billings, she worked at the Outlaws' office, helped at Saturday pregames, scheduled appearances for the players and took them on location.

During her four weeks in Miami, Wendt worked with 10 interns under former Dolphins player Twan Russell, coordinator of Youth Programs. The interns were part of the operations staff for training camp and facilitated Dol-Fit, a youth program and junior training camp. The program encourages education among young athletes, including the lesson that a college degree will lead to success as an athlete.

"Dol-Fit promotes positive choices, physical fitness and education among youth," Wendt said. "Our role was to run the football drills as well as support and encourage the kids who were participating and let them know how they were doing."

She and other interns also coordinated the half-time games that Dol-Fit's winning teams played in front of thousands of spectators. She also helped with VIP check-in and assisted with security and at the media gate. During training camp, Wendt handed out rosters and answered questions from the thousands of fans who attended practice sessions.

At one preseason game, she was responsible for setting up the inflatable tunnel the team runs through to get on the field. Once team introductions were completed, the interns had less than a minute to take the tunnel down.

Wendt had never been to a professional game before, so the view from the field during the national anthem and half-time activities was stunning.

"The atmosphere was so fun and exciting, it was phenomenal. You can't top the feeling of being part of a production like that," said Wendt, who grew up watch-

ing football on Sundays with her father. "There was so much energy in the stands. For someone who loves football, it was the ultimate moment."

Wendt said her Linfield education was indispensable in both internships. Her classes helped her engage with a diverse audience ranging from athletes, youth, fans and executive officials. She also understood how society and institutions work, as well as how to recognize the differences among people with varied backgrounds.

"Sarah was passionate about obtaining this position and pursued her goal," said Amy Orr, associate professor of sociology and Wendt's advisor. "She is an excellent example of what students can do when they put their mind to it."

Wendt is interested in a position in community relations that involves projects to benefit others. Her internship taught her that the planning and execution of the games needs to be finely tuned, meticulous and detailed to the minute.

"Athletes have a great potential to be role models within the community and I want a job where I can make a difference in people's lives," Wendt said. "Through community relations players are doing service projects and I want to be involved in doing something that makes a difference." ■

– Katrina Peavey '10



Sarah Wendt '10 was one of 10 interns who helped facilitate Dol-Fit, a youth program sponsored by the Miami Dolphins football team that encourages young athletes to pursue college degrees.