



## **Richard Immel, '12** **Marketing Manager, SportsEngine**

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Since he was a fourth grader, wrestling has been a part of Richard Immel's life. Immel was a member of the University of Oklahoma's wrestling team, and now the 2012 journalism graduate is still connected to the sport as a professional in his role at SportsEngine. Recently, Immel shared about how his time at Gaylord College prepared him for his career, which has included a stint with USA Wrestling and working as a press officer at the 2016 Olympic Games.

### **What is your favorite memory from your time at Gaylord College?**

There are so many wonderful memories to choose from. Outside of picking up a New York Times and casually lounging in the common area before class, I fondly remember having the opportunity to work with our local military members on media training. Students were able to develop interview skills in a more serious environment, while also helping provide a service to our military. It was a valuable experience and flat out cool to be a part of.

laughed. We celebrated. We cried. We sat in silence. If ever there was a two-week stretch that defined “roller coaster” it was those two weeks in Rio. I will cherish that opportunity for the rest of my life. I also got to chat with one of the greats, Dan Patrick, which was surreal for an aspiring journalist.

### **You were a wrestler at OU. What has it been like to be able to combine the sport with a communications career?**

In a single word, rewarding. It's not very often that individuals get to work in a field that also incorporates their personal passions. I have been involved with the sport of wrestling since I was in fourth grade in some form or another. Wrestling has always been a part of my personal narrative. Some the greatest inspirations from my childhood were wrestlers, and I've had the opportunity to work closely with nearly all of them. Who gets to do that? Not many people. I hope everyone has the opportunity to combine work with passion. It makes the experience exponentially more valuable and enjoyable.

**Do you have a favorite faculty/staff member at Gaylord?**

Julie Jones is a remarkable leader and champion for Gaylord College. She impacted my life in ways I'm sure she could never know. The first serious journalism course I enrolled in at OU was instructed by Dr. Jones, 3003 I believe. Who knew running late to class because my wrestling practice ran long would not fly as an excuse? Such a great first impression! Not only did she challenge me to improve myself in all areas of journalism, she embraced me for who I am and what I wanted to be, and helped me blaze my own trail of success. It doesn't hurt that she's one of the coolest people you'll ever meet. MOJOs activate!

**How did your career path lead you to SportsEngine?**

It sure feels like my professional career has progressed by happenstance more than anything else, but I know a great deal of hard work and drive has led me to where I'm at today. Right out of the gate, the education I received at Gaylord, combined with my passion for wrestling, gave me a dream opportunity to work for USA Wrestling, where I devoted six years of service to an incredible organization and community. I ended up at SportsEngine, in large part, because of the relationships I made and the personal network I built with colleagues at NBC and SportsEngine from my time at USA Wrestling. It wasn't an opportunity I was looking for, but when it approached me, I couldn't pass it up. It's funny how that works.

**Describe your role at SportsEngine.**

As with most roles at a high-paced company like SportsEngine, my role is ever-evolving. I began my SportsEngine career as the lead marketer for its market-leading wrestling technology solution, Trackwrestling. I have since taken over marketing management of SportsEngine's emerging eCommerce division, which is the fastest growing area of the overall business, and one of the largest segments of the youth sports market. If I had to sum it all up, I'd say I oversee execution of all things marketing for multiple product lines to help drive brand awareness, generate new customers and revenue, increase the actual value for our customers and drive innovation with the future of the business in mind. I never know what is going to come across my desk on a

**How did Gaylord College prepare you for your future career?**

My time at Gaylord College helped prepare me for a career in countless ways. The exposure to different focus areas was a major part of my professional development. There were opportunities to work on long-form written features, shoot and edit video projects, dabble in graphic design and learn the basics of web development and programming languages. All of these different experiences were important because they encouraged an atmosphere of adaptability and innovation. It's crucial to have a well-rounded skillset no matter what industry one ends up in after college. Likewise, the desire to learn more never goes out of style.

**What advice would you give to current students aspiring to a career in mass communication?**

Be open to work in areas outside of your comfort zone, especially early on in your career. By doing this you have the opportunity to learn what you like and what you don't like about the industry, and not get swept up with what you think is your dream job. You also have a chance to develop your professional toolbox, experiment with innovation and challenge yourself mentally. I promise these types of experiences will make you sharper when the time comes for you to hit the big time. Another piece of advice is to travel outside of the country as often as possible. I've been fortunate enough to travel to over 20 countries across four continents and it has shaped my perspective more than anything. I fully believe I am a better person at my core because I've connected with people of different cultures.

**What do you do for fun outside of work?**

Any time I can get outside it's a win. I enjoy going on hikes with my wife, camping and climbing a mountain or two when I get the chance. I also dabble with photography (this goes back to the whole concept of trying things outside of your comfort zone) and have been able to shoot some pretty awesome sporting events the past few years. And, if all else fails, a good session of Call of Duty does the trick as a nightcap.

**Are there any other organizations or projects you're involved with outside**

daily basis, which can be a bit daunting, yet exciting at the same time. The opportunity to work for this company has been tremendous, and I'm very thankful they took a chance on me.

**What do you consider to be the most significant moments of your career so far?**

The moment that stands out the most to me is the opportunity I had to be a Team USA press officer at the 2016 Olympic Games in Brazil. It's really hard to explain how an opportunity like that impacts oneself. Let's just say it's incredible to play a small part in the culmination of another person's dream. I was able to build trustworthy relationships with our Olympic wrestlers for years leading up to the Games. Whether they won a gold medal or had their dreams shattered, I was there with them at the end. I felt everything. We

**of your full-time job that you want to highlight?**

My time is pretty well spent between my work at SportsEngine and spending time with my family, but I have been fortunate enough to work with some top-tier organizations to try to give back as best I can. I serve on the boards of the National Wrestling Media Association and the Wrestlers in Business Network – Minnesota Chapter, both of which focus on professional development in the wrestling community. I also serve on SportsEngine's Better Together Task Force which focuses on diversity, equity and inclusion efforts within the workplace and the communities we serve. I encourage all of you to get involved with your respective communities if you are able. It often time seems hard to fit in the time to do such things, but it does make a difference.



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