

TAYLOR — APRIL 2026

THE CREATOR ECONOMY PLAYBOOK FOR SPORTS

Where sports, culture, creators & earned coverage converge

taylor

**You Can Buy
Your Way Into The Sport.**

**YOU CAN'T BUY
YOUR WAY INTO
THE CONVERSATION.**



THE STATE OF SPORTS MARKETING

Brands Are Everywhere. Fans Don't Care.

- Logos are visible in arenas and on TV screens
- Athlete deals are signed
- Official sponsorship deals are locked

And yet brands are invisible in the conversation.
Visibility isn't the problem. **Relevance is.**



THE SHIFT

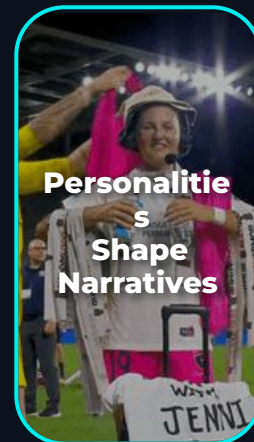
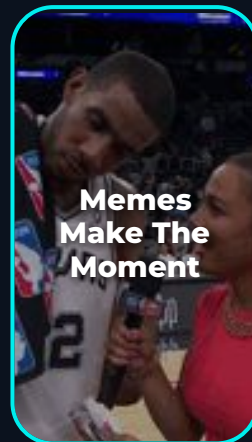
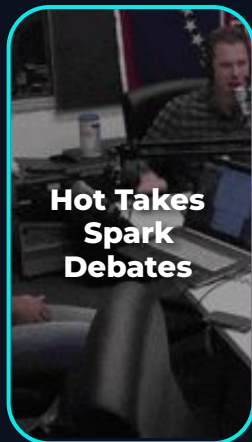
Culture Lives In The Feed Not On The Field

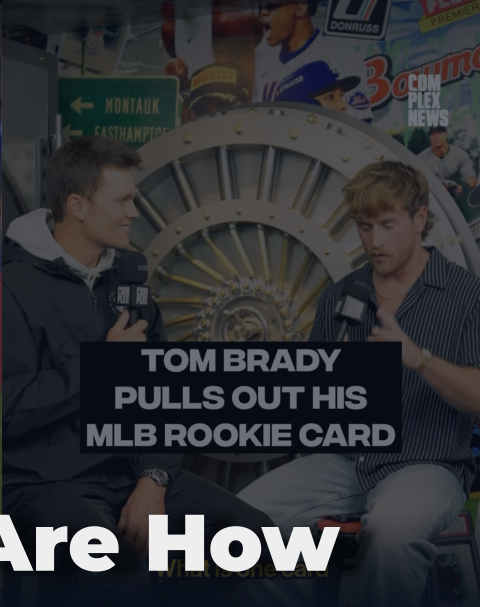
The game creates the moment.
The internet decides if it matters.



74%

Of young adults get most sports
content from social media platforms





Creators Are How People Experience The Game Today

ATHLETES

Build Media
Ecosystems

STREAMERS

Are The New
Broadcasters

FANS

Drive Commentary
And Momentum

PERSONALITIES

Decide What
The Story Is

Fans Follow People Now, Not Just Teams

The relationship between fan and sport has fundamentally shifted.

Fans rally around athletes, personalities and creators—not just the entities they rep or play for. As a result, creators have become the connective tissue between sports moments and their meaning.

Brands that build around them don't just reach fans, they become part of how fans experience the game.

BY THE NUMBERS

62%

Of Gen Z fans identify as fans of the athlete, rather than the athlete's sport

58% • 53%

Of Millennial & Gen Z sports fans respectively say creators influence how they follow sports

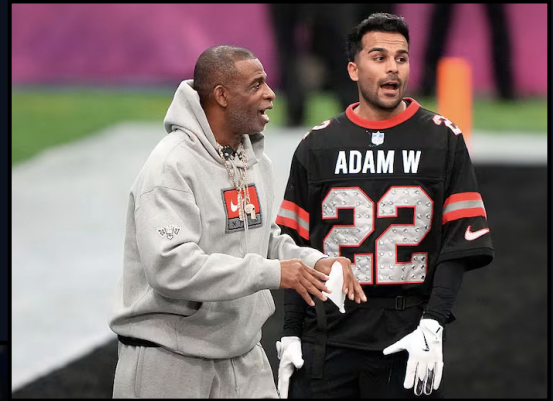
19x

More Earned Media Value (EMV) is generated from sports creators than brand-owned accounts

Most Brands Still Treat Creators **Like Ad Units**

But treating them this way limits what they can unlock.
They offer so much more:

- Not just reach, but *creativity*
- Not just amplification, but *interpretation*
- Not just posting, but *shaping the story*





Creators Translate Sports Moments Into Culture.

**FOR BRANDS, IT'S THE
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
BEING SEEN AND BEING
RELEVANT.**

HOW BRANDS **WIN** IN THE SPORTS CREATOR ECONOMY

01

**Build A
Creator
System, Not
A Creator
Roster**

02

**Let Creators
Lead, Not
Just Post**

03

**Own The
Moment
Before And
After The
Game**

04

**Measure
Conversation,
Not Just
Reach**

PLAY #1

BUILD A CREATOR SYSTEM, NOT A ROSTER

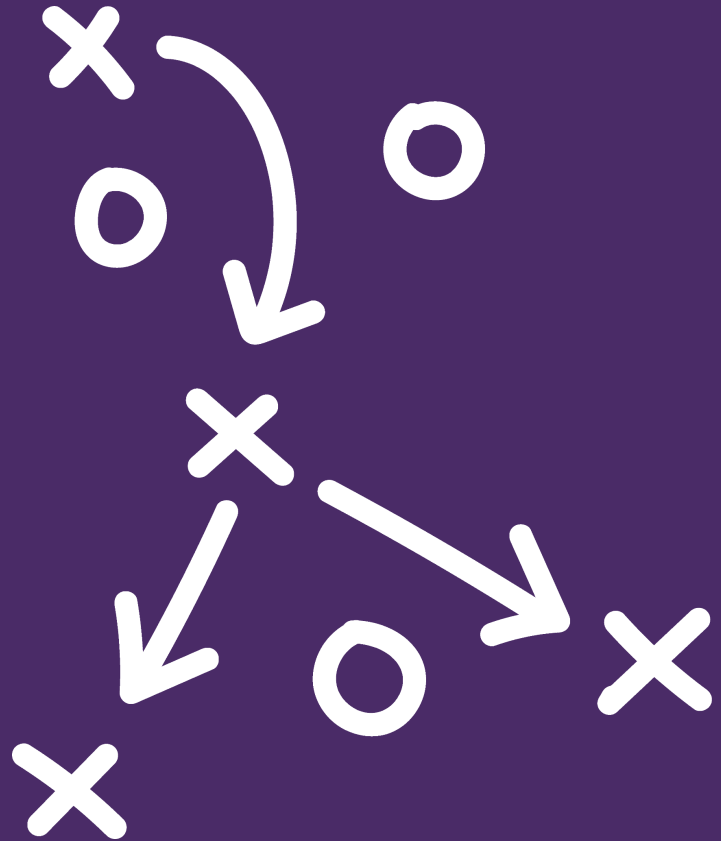
Influence comes from creators showing up together, in sync.

Too often, brands activate creators in silos —
campaign to campaign, moment to moment.

The shift: Build a system where roles, timing, and content are connected.

One creator can start a conversation.

A coordinated system owns it.



THE WHOLE PERFORMS BETTER THAN THE PARTS.

When multiple creators post on the same topic in a short window, platforms read it as a trend and push content beyond existing followers into discovery. That's the system advantage.

BY THE NUMBERS

10-19 Creators

Nearly a third of high-performing brands say they achieved optimal results with 10–19 creators per campaign.

3.1x

more unique reach than creators' combined follower bases when leveraging coordinated roster content.

PLAY #1

BUILD A
CREATOR
SYSTEM, NOT A
ROSTER



PLAY #1



**BUILD A
CREATOR
SYSTEM, NOT A
ROSTER**

THE VIBE CHECK

Siloed campaigns can fade fast.
But when creators show up together,
something shifts.

It stops feeling like advertising.
It feels like consensus.

DRUSKI

2023

WIN THE LAYER OF INFLUENCE BETWEEN LEAGUES AND FANS

Each archetype reaches fans differently. Build with a mix to meet fans where they are.

PLAY #1

BUILD A
CREATOR
SYSTEM, NOT A
ROSTER



LEAGUES



ILONA MAHER

ATHLETE-FIRST
CREATORS



JUJU ADAMS

SOCIAL-NATIVE
HOSTS



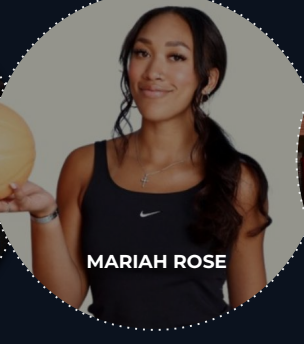
DUKE DENNIS

STREAMING
PERSONALITIES



KENNY BEECHAM

NEW-AGE
ANALYSTS



MARIAH ROSE

FAN-FORWARD
VOICES



DEX ROBINSON

SPORT-ADJACENT
TASTEMAKERS

FANS

BRANDS WINNING THE DAY

PLAY #1

BUILD A
CREATOR
SYSTEM, NOT A
ROSTER



OLYMPICS x NBC
Collective Framing

Established a Creator Collective—aligning 20+ creators across platforms to operate as a recognizable single, scaled storytelling engine.



ADIDAS
Diverse Creator Mix

Activates a diverse mix of soccer creators—from players to freestylers to fan voices and style tastemakers—hitting different corners of soccer culture.



P&G
Coordinated Activation

Created a coordinated system for “Battle of the Paddles” around Super Bowl—talent posted in sync, building off each other’s content, culminating in a live creator vs. creator tournament that brought fans together.

PLAY #2

LET CREATORS LEAD, NOT JUST POST

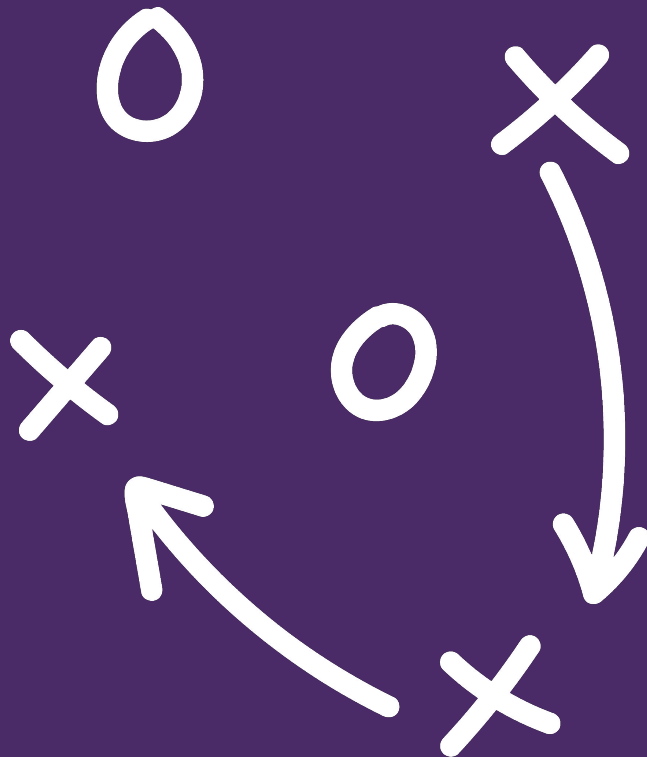
Sports culture lives in the stories, personalities, and reactions that surround the game, not just the game itself.

Fans experience it through podcasts, live streams, hot takes, and memes. Creators are the ones fluent in all of it.

The shift: Stop directing creators and start letting them translate your brand into culture.

Any brand can buy access to a sport.

Creators can reinforce why your brand belongs there.



WHY IT MATTERS

60%

of consumers now trust what a creator says about a brand more than what the brand says about itself.

That gap doesn't close with better brand content. It closes by choosing the right creators and getting out of their way.

PLAY #2



**LET CREATORS
LEAD, NOT
JUST POST**





REFRAME CREATOR ROLES AND PARTNERSHIP DYNAMICS

1

Identify Existing Narratives

Spot authentic conversations early through creators who have their finger on the pulse — and show up in real time as stories evolve.

2

Allow Creators to Shape the Strategy

Use creators' POV to guide how you fit in culture. They understand how fans engage and can shape participation that's authentic, additive and relevant.

3

Design for Creator-Native Distribution

Build content that works within the formats, rhythms, and behaviors of creator platforms, so fans want to engage and carry the conversation forward.

It's the difference of presence in culture and participation in culture.

CAPTURE ATTENTION ACROSS THE SPORTSTAINMENT ECOSYSTEM

Meet fans beyond the field — where conversation is born and where culture thrives.

PLAY #2

LET CREATORS
LEAD, NOT
JUST POST



EXPERIENCES

- CREATOR EVENTS & POP UPS
- GAMING
- AR/VR

AMPLIFICATION

- MEMES
- REMIX CULTURE
- REACTIONS & COMMENTARY
- EARNED MEDIA



ORIGINAL CONTENT

- PODCASTS & LONG-FORM CONTENT
- SHORT FORM SOCIAL CONTENT & PODCAST CLIPS

CONNECTION

- FAN COMMUNITIES
- LIVE STREAMS & ALT BROADCASTS
- WATCH PARTIES



BRANDS WINNING THE DAY



GOOGLE PIXEL
Creators Drive Creative

Creators equipped with early-access Pixel devices and led the creative, bringing the Pixel 9 to life through their native styles.

Watch With

Live commentary with your favorite creators



NFL x YOUTUBE
Native Fan Formats

The NFL and YouTube let creators lead alt-cast streams—turning games into native, reaction-driven content built on how their fans interact with them.



SMIRNOFF
Cultural-Led Integration

Tapped into the spotlight of WAGs, sideline stories, and gameday fashion, Smirnoff partnered with athletes, creators and WAGs to turn fashion and BTS rituals into content, aligning with fan interests.

PLAY #3

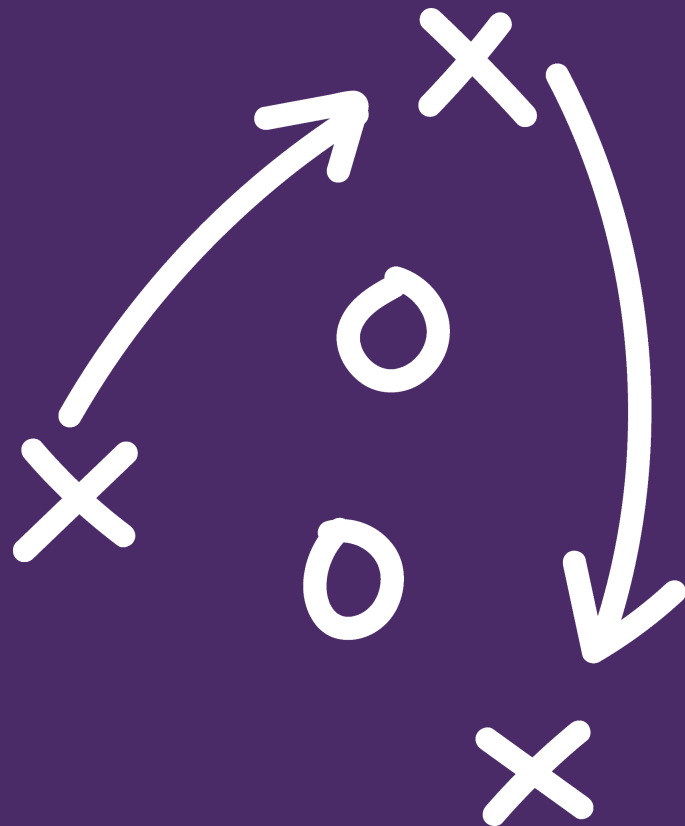
OWN THE MOMENT BEFORE AND AFTER THE GAME

A game is fleeting. The conversation around it lasts weeks. Creators build anticipation before the whistle, capture the moment in real time, and sustain the story long after it ends. They also eliminate the offseason entirely. Trades, rivalries, tunnel fits, and hot takes keep fandom alive year-round.

The shift: Build creator partnerships to deliver a continuous content engine — not a campaign calendar.

Sport starts the conversation.

Creators keep it alive.



MOMENTS DON'T CONVERT — MOMENTUM DOES.

BY THE NUMBERS

61%

of consumers find a creator's recommendation more trustworthy if they have mentioned the brand multiple times over several months.

4.5

branded, creator interactions needed by consumers before a first-time purchase can be made.

PLAY #3



OWN THE
MOMENT BEFORE
AND AFTER
THE GAME

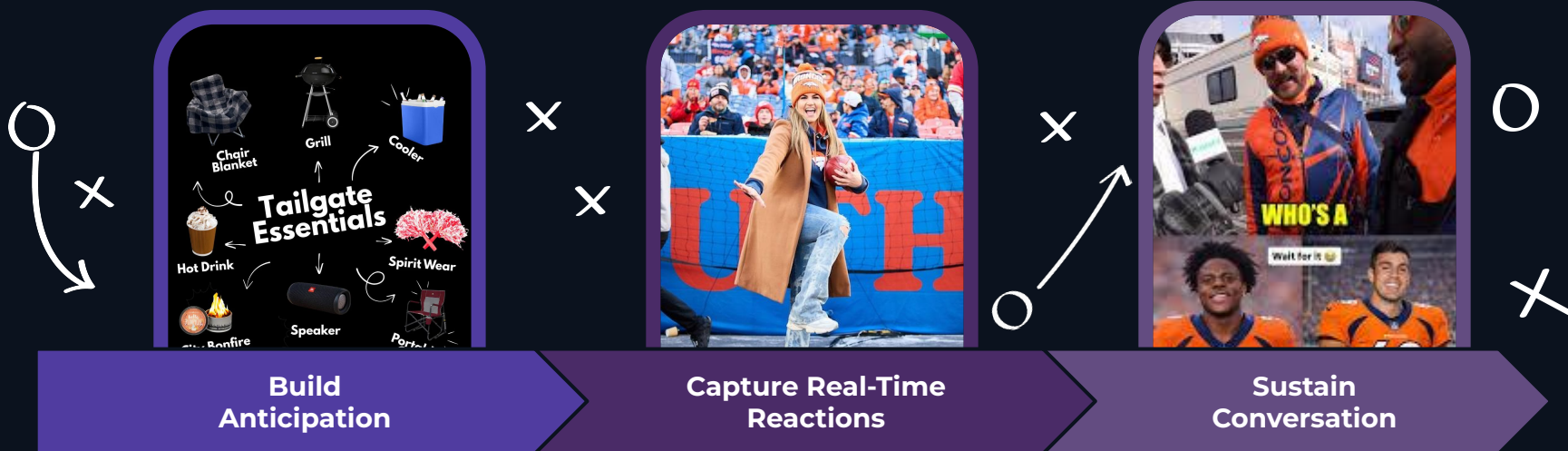
TURN ONE MOMENT INTO MANY

Creators don't just extend moments. They make them mean something.
Leverage their formula to drive ongoing engagement opportunities.

PLAY #3



OWN THE
MOMENT BEFORE
AND AFTER
THE GAME



Build Anticipation

Creators build the story before the story happens.

They fuel hype and expectation.

Capture Real-Time Reactions

Creators make the moment mean something.

They translate live action into commentary, shaping fan sentiment.

Sustain Conversation

Creators keep it alive long after the final whistle.

They amplify via remix and recap, harnessing fan response to carry the moment forward.

THERE IS NO OFFSEASON

The game is the spark. Creators fuel the fire.

PLAY #3



OWN THE
MOMENT BEFORE
AND AFTER
THE GAME



Creator
Topics

Draft Hype

Trade Deadlines

Tunnel Fits

Off-field Stories

Fan Debates

Rivalries & Drama

Comeback Arcs

“OFFSEASON” IS A MYTH. HERE’S WHAT KEEPS THE ENGINE RUNNING.

Player & Personality Storylines

- Athlete lifestyle & off-field moments
- Personal brands & business ventures
- Relationships, friendships & rivalries
- Tunnel fits & style evolution

01

Fan Participation

- Fantasy sports & betting culture
- Hot takes, debates & predictions
- Fan rituals, superstitions & traditions
- Community identity (team allegiance, loyalty)

02

Culture & Internet Moments

- Pop culture crossovers (music, fashion/merch, celebrities)
- Internet humor shaping perception
- Remix culture (edits, mashups, soundbites)
- Viral trends

03

Transactions & League Evolution

- Trades, free agency & rumors
- Draft speculation & hype
- Contract negotiations & disputes
- Injuries, comebacks and redemption arcs

04

PLAY #3



OWN THE
MOMENT BEFORE
AND AFTER
THE GAME

BRANDS WINNING THE DAY

PLAY #3



OWN THE
MOMENT BEFORE
AND AFTER
THE GAME



NBA x PLAYSTATION
Expand a Moment

The PlayStation NBA Creator Cup kicked off All-Star before it began—turning it into a multi-phase moment with creators driving early hype and conversation.



DICK'S SPORTING GOODS
Year-Round Engine

Eliminates the offseason with Varsity Team—activating athletes and creators year-round through quarterly “Trend Boxes” and cultural moments.



BEATS BY DRE
Off-Field Lifestyle

Beats' Elite Class extends storytelling beyond the game—tapping athletes and platforms like LeagueFits to spotlight off-field style and lifestyle moments.

MEASURE CONVERSATION, NOT JUST REACH

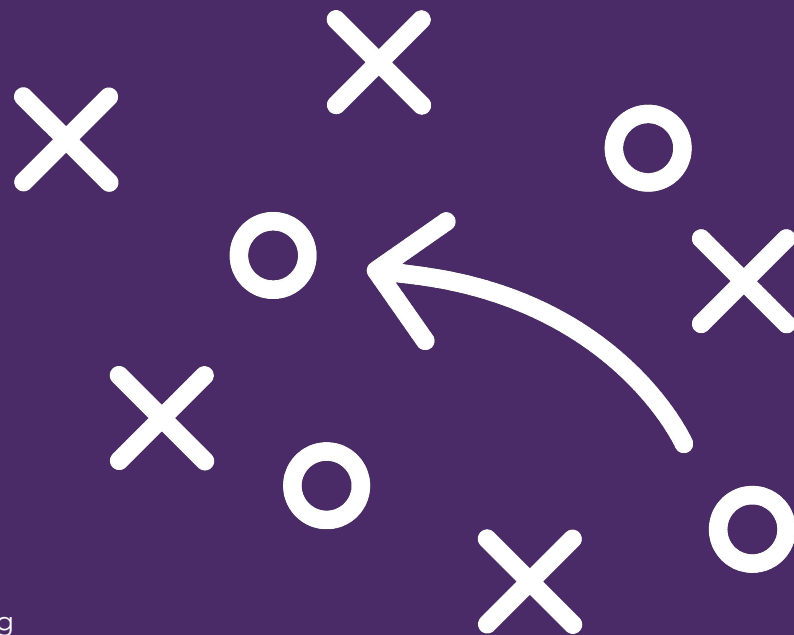
Reach tells you how many people saw it — the delivery.
Conversation tells you what actually happened — the *effectiveness*.

In a creator led-ecosystem, the most valuable outcomes are
the actions: responses, shares, participation, and continued dialogue.

The shift: Redefine success from exposure to engagement — measuring
impact by what people do.

Attention fades.

Conversation compounds.



THE ALGORITHM REWARDS PARTICIPATION, NOT BROADCAST

Brands that design for **sharing, saving, and conversation** don't just get more reach they get cultural traction.

*Note: Monitoring repost performance as data matures.



THE NEW ALGORITHM

Most important



1ST



2ND



'Reposts' are a new feature, yet hold importance representing user identity.



3RD



4TH

Least important important

PLAY #4
MEASURE CONVERSATION, NOT JUST REACH

People Don't Trust Ads— They Trust Each Other

This is why conversation compounds. Every share, comment, and repost is a peer endorsement your brand didn't have to buy.

BY THE NUMBERS

3x

Consumers are 3x more likely to say content created by others (comments, shares, UGC) is more authentic than content created by brands.

161%

Conversion increases across industries when consumers engage with earned/user-generated content.

PLAY #4

MEASURE
CONVERSATION,
NOT JUST REACH



A basketball player in a white New York Knicks jersey with blue and orange accents is shown in a celebratory pose, shouting with his mouth wide open. He is wearing a black compression sleeve on his left arm. The background is a blurred crowd of spectators in a stadium.

THE GAME PLAN

To thrive in sports today, the brands that win aren't the loudest.

They are the ones fans actually want to hear from, because they built systems that made the brand *part of the conversation.*

EARN YOUR PLACE IN CULTURE

01

Build Connected Creator Systems

Stop managing a list of creators. Build a connected system where athlete, fan, analyst, and lifestyle voices amplify each other.

02

Let Creators Take The Lead

Don't just sponsor creators. Give them the strategy and let them shape how your brand shows up in culture.

03

Win The Moments Before & After

There's no offseason when creators are always on. Every trade, tunnel fit, and hot take is a brand entry point.

04

Prioritize Conversation Over Reach

Reach tells you who saw it. Conversation tells you if it mattered. Redefine what success looks like.

Ready to run the playbook on how your brand shows up with creators?

Reach out to us at hello@taylorstrategy.com to explore a custom creator strategy assessment.



BEHIND THE PLAYBOOK



CHANTEL WILLIAMS

Director of Strategy



YVETTE Signore

Senior Strategist, Influencer & Content Strategy

