

TOGETHER WITH



Sam Marks is the Director of Business Strategy and Analytics for the Boston Bruins and TD Garden, where he helps steer both one of hockey's most iconic franchises and one of the most well-known entertainment venues. Before Boston, he rebuilt the Business Strategy & Analytics function for the Arizona Coyotes, worked with Gary Vaynerchuk to scale a piece of his business, and helped launch a startup. A Chapel Hill native, Sam's path from consulting to sports business is a story of pivots, people, and learning.

Finding the Door to Sports

Sam studied Chemistry and Economics at Duke, and didn't enter sports right away. After graduation, he moved to Chicago and spent four years in management consulting, with roles at IBM and Accenture. "I

really enjoyed the project-to-project nature of the work,” he says, citing how quickly he got to learn from smart people across different industries. “The only part I didn’t love was the travel.”

When the road took its toll, he pivoted back to Durham, earning his MBA from Duke’s Fuqua School of Business. There, he met classmates with internship experience at the NFL, MLB, NBA, and Nike, exposure that reframed what was possible. “My first year at Fuqua was the first time I realized that sports is a profession that one can actually attain as a full-time career,” he recalls. That realization sparked a professional exploration into the industry: consulting for the Chicago Bulls, interning at the NFL Commissioner’s office, and completing independent research on the NBA’s League Pass.

A Non-Linear Path

Sam’s immediate postgraduate route - shaped heavily by the ongoing pandemic - was unconventional. He helped a former Duke classmate launch a startup (Mylance), then joined a sports and entertainment talent agency backed by Gary Vee. In 2021, the Arizona Coyotes brought him on to rebuild their analytics function. “I started as a team of one. By the end, we were a team of seven or eight.” Despite the challenges of working in a growth region, Sam found the work deeply meaningful. “I loved my time in Arizona...I worked with incredible teammates and together we took ownership of tremendous impacts on the organization, and our sport.”

With family on the East Coast, an opportunity to return to the Eastern time zone felt right when one presented itself. He joined the Bruins and TD Garden as Director of Business Strategy and Analytics. “I just wrapped up my second season, and I’ve enjoyed this chapter in my journey.”



Learning From People Around Him

Sam sees clear parallels between the people he’s learned from the most: “Consistent patterns include intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and having the ability to empathize. Those tools, having confidence in yourself...and trusting those who you’re working with...can lead to some powerful outcomes.”

Intellectual curiosity, he says, is essential in a role where certainty is rare. “The questions that we answer, not only do we not usually have an obvious playbook to answer them with, we don’t even always have a straightforward way to know if we’re right.” Empathy is just as critical. “We serve stakeholders as an internal agency, and to truly meet their needs, we have to empathize with them, understand their concerns, and their priorities.”

And above all, confidence matters, but only when it’s grounded in humility. “I have trust in my training, I have trust in my experience, and the collective learnings that got me to my current seat at the table. At

the same time, I always try to be mindful enough of my own limits, and recognize that I'm reliant on the expertise and wisdom from my colleagues, peers, and leaders."

Reflection and Advice

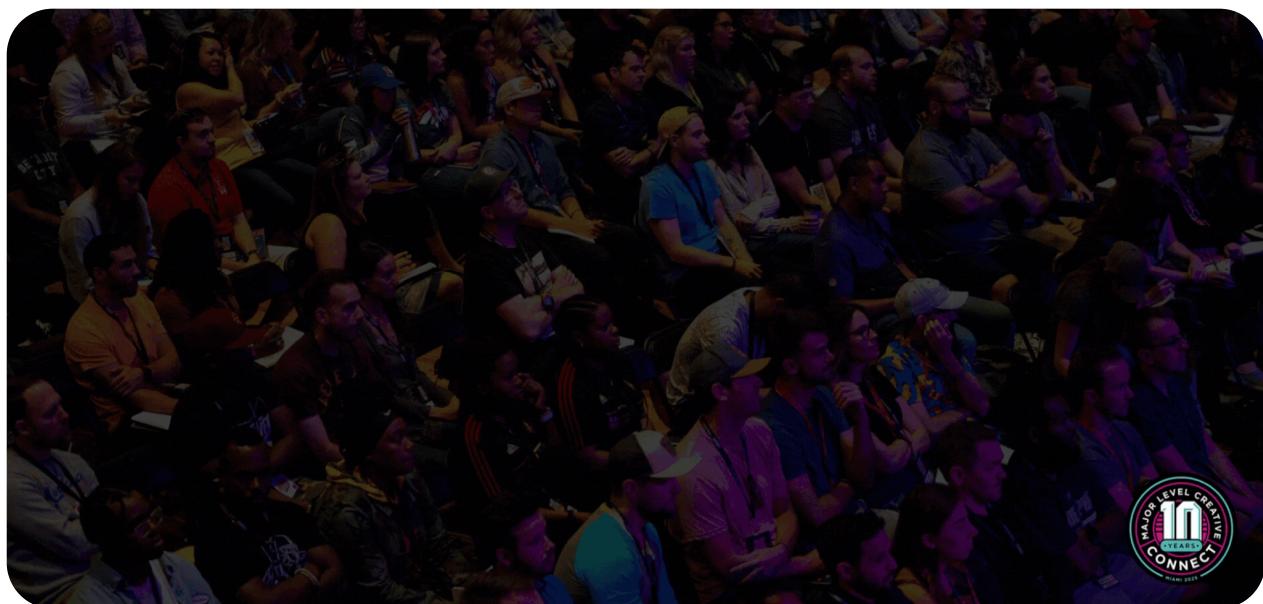
Looking back, Sam says he'd remind his younger self that it's okay not to have everything figured out. "In your career, your goals are going to evolve, and that's okay. The time I spent working towards a since-changed goal is not wasted; rather, it's an investment of effort through which I learned more about myself and that I grew from."

Sam's advice to people hoping to break into sports is simple: "Figure out why you want to be in sports and lean into that." That means understanding the work itself: "Have a deep grasp on what one in your aspirational seat actually does, and then if that matches your skills, fantastic... find a way to articulate and be very specific about what value you can bring to an organization – and then do just that."

His Why

Sam's motivation comes from two places: "Satisfaction in the work I'm doing and my family ultimately drives every decision." He's proud of his accomplishments, solving complex problems in an emotionally charged industry. At the end of the day, balance is critical. "I think working a job that you are able to find interesting, unlocks opportunities to do those things with the people you care about - in your professional relationships, and those external to work."

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