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Professional Basketball Internship a Lifetime Dream Come True for GWU Sport Management Major

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Ryan Price ('16) Gains Experience in Charlotte Hornets NBA Executive Office

By Becca Leap, Intern for GWU Communications

The Charlotte Hornets basketball team has always held a special place in the heart of Ryan Price ('16). Born in Charlotte, Price has fond memories of attending games at the Charlotte Coliseum, the former home of the National Basketball Association (NBA) team. But he had no idea he would some day work with the organization as an intern while a student at Gardner-Webb University.

Price, who hails from Forest City, N.C., grew up with a love for sports and a desire to turn that passion into a career. Upon his arrival at Gardner-Webb, he entered the Sport Management major in the Godbold School of Business and quickly discovered how perfectly the program fit his goals. "I realized it was the best path for me to take if I really wanted a future in sports," he shares.

Price participated in an on-campus internship with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Compliance Office at GWU in the Spring 2015 semester. The experience taught him about the day-to-day operations of an athletics office, as well as general professional workplace skills. Those experiential learning opportunities inspired Price to go beyond the familiarity of Gardner-Webb for his next internship.

He searched online to find postings for positions with professional organizations like the NBA, National Football League (NFL) and Major League Baseball (MLB). Price's persistence eventually paid off when he was offered an internship with the Charlotte Hornets Executive Office and Basketball Operations during the Fall 2015 semester.

While he would have taken a position with any professional sports organization, Price was thrilled to gain valuable work experience with a team he has been so connected with throughout his life. "When the Hornets left Charlotte for New Orleans (in 2002), I was devastated," he recalls. The NBA returned to the Queen City in 2004 with the Charlotte Bobcats, but his passion for the team reignited when the basketball franchise reclaimed the Hornets name in 2014, just a year before his internship.

Price enjoyed the excitement of daily work in a professional sports office. “No day was the same,” he recalls. Some days, Price arranged team travel or coordinated the visits of special guests. On other days he created presentations for players, staff and other members of the organization.

While interning with an NBA team granted Price valuable professional experience, it had other perks as well. Price often interacted with players, and he had a courtside seat at Time Warner Cable Arena for every Hornets home game. His favorite memories stem from the times he spent with basketball legends like team owner Michael Jordan, and other executives like Jordan’s brother Larry, the organization’s director of player personnel. “I would sit in Larry’s office and just talk basketball,” he recollects.

The process of applying to an internship, especially one at an organization at a professional sports level, can seem daunting, Price admits. But he urges fellow students to take the shot. “Don’t be afraid,” he says. “You can work with (Gardner-Webb) Career Services to perfect your resume.” He credits the office’s staff and resources with helping him secure his position with the Hornets.

Ultimately, Price hopes that his time with the Hornets will lead to further opportunities in professional sports. He aspires to build a career in the NBA and believes that the connections he formed during his internship will help him achieve that.

Getting a foot in the door was the first step for Price to eventually reach his lofty NBA goals, and he advises other students to follow suit. “Don’t be afraid to go after something that appears too big to handle,” he advises. “More times than not, you’ll surprise yourself by what you’re capable of achieving.”