

The EA SPORTS Madden NFL Franchise as a Teaching Tool for Business Students

Final Report to the NWACC

April 13, 2009

Original Program Goal

The Warsaw Sports Marketing Center (WSMC) sought to develop a teaching module that leveraged existing videogame technology to better teach basic business concepts to undergraduate business students.

Why the Madden NFL Franchise on Microsoft XBOX 360?

The NFL-themed videogame provided a compelling software platform that resonates with the target audience. The game already included play modes that could be utilized to develop a basic business simulation that is often used in business school curriculums. XBOX 360 provided the best platform to showcase the gaming technology to students and is the first choice for a business school that already standardizes on Microsoft software for the PC.

Curriculum Details

The WSMC proposed a single term/semester module for undergraduate business students. The course included foundational lectures on many of business aspects of the NFL including marketing, management, accounting and finance issues. The featured component was be a team-based activity in which multiple student groups will become owners of the same NFL team. Using the franchise mode in Madden NFL, students made a variety of business and player decisions and then simulated each week of competition. Results each week will provide the instructor topics to connect the simulation back to the business curriculum. At the conclusion of the “season”, student teams all finished the season with different win-loss records, different player personnel issues and different business results. Those results provided a wonderful context to discuss the role of business decision-making in the business of sports.

Another compelling component of the curriculum was its connection to an NFL franchise. In the pilot program, the WSMC partnered with the Seattle Seahawks organization. The Seahawks provided guest speakers across both their business and football operations to supplement the lecture material. As the course ran concurrently with the NFL season, students also learned from the real results of the franchise and compared it with their own simulations. At the conclusion of the simulation, the winning student team travelled to Seattle and met with the executive team and attend an NFL game.

National Rollout

The vision of the pilot was to create a module that could be rolled out to other business schools and linked to other NFL franchises. The EA SPORTS Madden NFL Franchise provides scalability and local relevance to accelerate the rollout as appropriate.

Timeline

May 2008 – WSMC staff met EA SPORTS Madden NFL team in Florida to launch project

May – August 2008 – Curriculum development

September – December 2008 – Pilot class delivered at the University of Oregon

January 2009 – Pilot review

Fall 2009 – Second phase pilot
Program Update – April 2009

As was proposed in the original timeline, the development of the simulation and curriculum led to the introduction of the “Madden Curriculum” in fall of 2008. Half of the student enrolled in SBUS 199 elected to participate in the pilot with 13 teams meeting once per week in a lab format to run their individual simulations.

The simulation was complemented by significant NFL-themed content in the course with lectures covering key aspects of the business of professional football along with guest speakers directly involved with the sport. A copy of the course syllabus is included as an appendix.

Assessment Against Program Learning Goals

The primary goal in the pilot was to establish that the use of a simple simulation would enhance the quality of the students’ learning experience and reinforce the content delivered in the classroom. Strong anecdotal evidence throughout the term supported this success metric. Student participation and attendance was consistent including the lab sessions that were not part of the standard four contact hours in the classroom. In the lab sessions students were engaged in the simulation, talking out decisions and tying the discussions back to content in the classroom. The written justifications required were of consistent quality and demonstrated an increased understanding of the business of sports as the term unfolded.

At the conclusion of the term students participated in course evaluations that validated the anecdotal evidence.

| | College Mean | SBUS 199 | Difference |
|--------------------------|--------------|----------|------------|
| Q. Instructional Quality | 4.05 | 4.76 | + .71 |
| Q. Course Quality | 3.96 | 4.57 | + .61 |
| Q. Amount Learned | 3.89 | 4.52 | + .63 |

Next Steps

At the conclusion of the pilot, I met with product managers at EA Sports to discuss the simulation and offer suggestions on how the franchise mode could be enhanced with features to better support the curriculum. As of April 2009, several features are part of the Madden ’10 release this summer but are pending due to development timelines. EA remains very supportive of the curriculum and agrees that a large rollout should coincide with a more robust set of business decisions being available in franchise mode. It is my hope that those features will be contained in the release of the game in the summer of 2010.

In the interim, the Madden Curriculum will continue to be piloted in the 2009-10 academic year. Revisions are being made to the syllabus, lectures and simulation based on feedback on the pilot. Most notably, the class size is being limited to 60 students so that all students in the course will take part in the simulation. I am also hoping to incorporate the additional features from the new release into the simulation. We have already received commitments from EA, the Seattle Seahawks and Microsoft to continue to support the program next year.

Publicity

The Madden Simulation was featured in two articles on the U of O campus this academic year.

Oregon Daily Emerald

http://media.www.dailyemerald.com/media/storage/paper859/news/2008/08/18/Sports/Grading_Your_Madden.Franchise-3399556.shtml

IT Connections

Spring Issue not yet available online - <http://it.uoregon.edu/itnews/>

Final Budget

To be submitted by April 17, 2009

Appendix

SPORTS BUSINESS 199 - SPORTS, BUSINESS AND SOCIETY

Lillis Business Complex – Room 211 CRN: 14734

Fall 2008 (M/W 4:00pm – 5:50p.m.)

INSTRUCTOR: Paul Swangard

Office: Lillis Business Complex – Room 445A Phone: 346-3262

E-mail: pswangar@uoregon.edu

OFFICE HOURS: M/W 2:30p.m. – 3:30p.m., OR BY APPOINTMENT

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Sports Business Journal – Each student must subscribe to this industry publication at a cost of \$50 for 12 weeks. This weekly is designed for the working professional in sports business and will give you a good sense of the current issues and topics relevant to the business. **PLEASE COMPLETE THE ONLINE SUBSCRIPTION BY THE END OF WEEK ONE.**

www.sportsbusinessjournal.com/candu/subscribe

Select the University of Oregon and then our class to order and pay online. For those who need it, you can also print their own receipt.

Note: Additional Readings will be distributed during the term either in class or electronically on Blackboard. All such material is required reading and subject to testing on exams.

COURSE OVERVIEW: As students potentially interested in business careers that might involve sports or entertainment, this course is meant as an introduction to the Lundquist College of Business, the Warsaw Sports Marketing Center and the developing field of sports business. In class, we'll try to help you see the roles sports and business play in our domestic and global society.

First, a word of caution. This is not intended to be a “gut” course built around “I like sports” or “a sports course should be ‘cake.’” Rather, my hope is to make this a “real-world” business school course that gives you an idea of how sport is run as a business and how businesses use sport to grow market share or profitability. It may also help you to see how competitive the “sports business world” is.

Additionally, bear in mind that sports business goes way beyond “let’s put LeBron James in a commercial.” The strategic planning, creative development, legal approval (by leagues, teams, agents or individuals), consumer presentation and use of sports imagery involve a significantly detailed process. Numbers in this game (the business world) are very important.

You should be prepared for me to call on people randomly for answers, inspiration and insight. This is called the Socratic method of teaching which will be a cornerstone of your university experience. This style is not meant to intimidate you but rather to force discussion and critical thinking. Recruiters, job interviewers and bosses do this all day long. You must be able to communicate quickly, using the available information. Your ability to translate data and concepts into your own words articulates your always-developing comprehension.

Finally, what I’m most interested in is that when you leave SBUS 199, some of you are inspired to put together the right grades to have a shot at getting into the College of Business and maybe even our internationally prominent sports business program.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- 1) To develop an understanding of contemporary sports, business and society and to be able to articulate the role they play in shaping our daily lives. This class is about the intersection of those activities.
- 2) To understand the role of marketing (i.e., the 4P's, advertising, public relations, promotions, sponsorship, licensing) within a broader business platform.
- 3) To understand the basics of sports marketing; and
- 4) To act and operate in an ethically appropriate fashion with contemporary sensibilities relative to sex, race, physical/mental handicap and place of origin (See attached Diversity Code).

ABSENCE AND DISHONESTY POLICY: I'll follow College of Business policy and enforce as necessary. I don't expect absences or dishonesty. In the real world, you get fired for either. Part of our job should be to help better prepare you for the future. If you are going to miss class for whatever reason show professionalism by contacting me BEFORE class. I'll show up every class if you will.

GRADING:

| | | | |
|--|---|------------|------|
| Examinations: | Two Multiple Choice/Short Answer Tests | 60% | |
| Write-ups: | Four case write-ups or EA Madden Exercise | 40% | |
| Class Participation/Attendance (helps students on the bubble): | | <u>+/-</u> | 100% |

OTHER:

- The Business School does not allow food in the classrooms. Beverages are permitted in closed, spill-proof travel mugs, pull-top plastic bottles, or plastic bottles with screw-tops. Other containers are not permitted (i.e., no drinks in cans or disposable cups).
- No laptops. All lectures will be available on blackboard after class. Discover the wonder of handwriting any lecture notes. Past experience suggests laptops are more a distraction than a learning tool in class.
- Cellphones and PDAs need to be turned off or be in silent mode. We can all live without the outside world during class.
- If you have special needs due to a disability, please see me privately after the first class.
- Class participation is essential since the right answers in your future "world" are in your head, not mine. Therefore, I will try to steer many discussions as opposed to leading them.
- **I WILL NOT ADMIT ANYONE FOR A TEST ONCE THE FIRST TEST-TAKER IN OUR CLASS HAS LEFT THE ROOM.**

CLASS SCHEDULE: (Note: Topics, speakers and schedules subject to change)

| <u>DATE</u> | <u>MATERIAL TO BE COVERED</u> |
|-----------------------|---|
| Week 1 (10/29 & 10/1) | Sports Business Overview |
| 2 (10/6 & 10/8) | College Sports |
| 3 (10/13 & 10/15) | Sport Products <i>Monday Guest Speaker – David Dunn, Athletes First</i> |
| 4 (10/20 & 10/22) | Sports Marketing: Advertising, Sponsorship and Endorsements <i>Wednesday Guest Speaker – Andy Dolich, SF 49ers</i> |
| 5 (10/27 & 10/29) | Sports Marketing: Club Marketing, Branding and Fan Avidity <i>Wednesday – Exam #1</i> |
| 6 (11/3 & 11/5) | Broadcasting, Media, Technology and Sports |
| 7 (11/10 & 11/12) | Broadcasting, Media, Technology and Sports <i>Wednesday Guest Speaker – Bill Chapin, Seattle Seahawks</i> |
| 8 (11/17 & 11/19) | International and Olympics |
| 9 (11/24 & 11/26) | Women’s Sports Wednesday – NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Getaway Day) |
| 10 (12/1 & 12/3) | Emerging Sports and Wrap-up |
| FINAL | <u>Thursday, December 11th at 3:15 p.m.</u> |

Case Write-ups

In addition to the two exams, students will have the opportunity to analyze sports business cases during the term. Each case will be required reading by all students for the purposes of our class discussion but you only have to turn in four case write-ups during the term. One case will be posted to Blackboard each Wednesday and if you choose to write about the case your paper will be due the following Monday at the beginning of class. On average, past case write-ups have been 2-4 pages double-spaced. As a former journalist, I’m big on accurate grammar and well written answers. Focus on style and substance and not length.

EA Sports Madden NFL Simulation

I’ve teamed up with the folks at EA Sports to create a business simulation exercise based on the Madden NFL videogame. This exercise focuses on the business decisions that can be made by the owner of an NFL franchise and DOES NOT INVOLVE PLAYING THE GAME. I will be looking for a group of students to help pilot the exercise this term. It will involve one 30 minute meeting outside of class each week and some weekly written assignments. Students participating in the exercise will not have to complete the case write-ups. I will provide additional details about the exercise on the first day of class.