

Catherine Clark
Icon Sports and Entertainment, Brentwood, TN
11 August 2014

Icon Sports and Entertainment is a public relations company founded and run by Ryan Altizer and Eddie Eusepi. They run the charities that pro athletes have their names attached to and work to promote the work that the athlete does with their individual charities. Ryan and Eddie's goal is to have one of their athletes win NFL's Man of the Year (most of Icon's current clients are NFL players; there are a few MLB players as well). Ryan and Eddie have succeeded in this very recently in 2012 with the Dallas Cowboys tight-end Jason Witten. Each individual athlete Ryan and Eddie represented has their own Dreambuilders charity with their specific goals, sponsors, and recipients except for certain athletes, such as Jason Witten, who take on their own completely new foundation. I worked closely with Jason Witten's Scorekeeper's Foundation during my internship. This foundation was born by Jason approaching Ryan and Eddie about an idea for his charity. He wanted to send a male mentor to domestic violence shelters so the children could have a picture of what a positive male mentor is in their life. Being raised in a family where domestic violence was present himself; he wanted to make sure to stop the cycle. Ryan and Eddie handle every aspect of this foundation from finding shelters to participate, to hosting dinners and events in order to find donors to raise money and awareness.

During my internship, I participated the most when working around Jason Witten's charity. At the beginning of my internship, the first day in fact, I shadowed Ryan on the first day of a camp Jason Witten was hosting for children in the Dallas area. These children, ages 7-18, signed up and paid a fee to spend the day training with a successful NFL player and many established coaches and college players. It was actually amazing how involved Jason was with the kids, making sure to spend time with every group that the children were divided into. This event was mostly for publicity to raise awareness for Jason's foundation and to attract new

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donors and sponsors. Current sponsors were there as well. Ryan, wanting to spend time with sponsors, hired a group called Pro Camps to run the event. I got to know the woman in charge very well as she was constantly running around with a walkie talkie, but always close to Ryan to tell him when key events were happening, such as the news crew pulling up. Ryan's job at this event, and a large part of his job I learned throughout my internship, is to make sure the sponsors are happy. Throughout the day, if Ryan did not have someone important to talk to, such as making sure Jason got to the radio and news interviews, he was at the VIP tent where the sponsors were sitting. He did not necessarily talk about Jason's foundation, but about their lives and jobs, etc. He knew each of them by name and their families. The day winded down and the camp ended, but Ryan's work was still going. He lead the sponsors to the lunch, cleverly leaving Jason behind a couple of minutes so there wouldn't be a rush to get pictures with him instead of moving venues to the cafeteria at the school where the camp was set up. Jason walked in a side entrance a couple of minutes later while everyone was getting food, to be greeted by Ryan and I. From there, we went off to a secluded part of the cafeteria where a film crew was set up. There Ryan informed the film crew they had a small amount of time. The film crew was from a local sports broadcast and Jason just had to film a couple of lines for them to use as stock footage. Throughout filming, whenever the film crew would give Jason an item to hold or wear, such as a football or jersey, Ryan was mindful of logos. Anything with a Cowboys logo on it would not be allowed to air, which means no press towards the event. After ten minutes of shooting, Ryan stopped the shooting, wanting Jason to move on towards the sponsors. After a small exchange with the film crew, we were on the move across the cafeteria towards the sponsors, Ryan quickly informed Jason of what he needed to say, who he really needed to thank. After that, Ryan let

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Jason go and continued to speak with all the sponsors. I was starving at that point so I sat down with a sponsor I had particularly connected with and saw sitting alone. At about 2 o'clock, Ryan and I left as the Pro Camps team was to oversee that everything was cleaned up.

I went to two Jason Witten camps while working for Ryan. The one on the first day was very low key and more about the sponsors than anything on Ryan's end. The second was hectic and more about press for Ryan. The second Jason Witten camp was entirely free and takes place every summer in Elizabethton, TN, or Jason's hometown. The workers at this camp were all friends and family of Jason, many of which were also sponsors. The night before when we stayed at a hotel with all the sponsors, the ESPN and Dallas Cowboys film crews showed up, doing interviews with lots of people that were connected to Jason- from his high school principal to citizens of Elizabethton. This was my first look at how Ryan handled the media. Having worked with the Dallas Cowboys film crew for years, he knew them by name and gave them access to material he was not giving to the ESPN crew. This ended up paying off later when a family member who was being interviewed said something Ryan had told them not to. The Dallas Cowboys film crew informed Ryan about this, knowing what was said would not be something Ryan would want to see aired to the nation, and told him they would obviously not use the footage. Ryan explained that his relationship with these film crews could be crucial and it was important to cultivate them. Also, when the ESPN film crew interviewed that particular family member, Ryan made sure to be present during this interview to stop anything that seemed to be going off the track he wanted to be aired.

At these camps, I shadowed Ryan as much as possible. For the second camp, when Ryan knew me better, he put me in charge of the silent auction. This was a simple task, but still

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exciting. It draws back to how important donors and sponsors are for a PR company that bases itself around promoting charities. I never imagined going into PR would mean going into budgeting, but it very much does. You have to know your limitations for how much you are capable of doing for an event while also keeping in mind how much needs to go back to the charity you're funding.

Those were my two most exciting days, as they were full of new information and handling the media, which can be dramatic at times. My job for most of the summer was to make receipts for each donor or sponsor and to also make a handout for the Jason Witten Scorekeeper's Foundation. I have taken a class in all the Microsoft Office tools, so Ryan made sure to capitalize on that and had me design a couple templates for the receipts as well as a handout. I made two templates for the two different types of receipts: a camp receipt and a dinner/event receipt. I also was in charge of gathering the information needed to be printed on the receipt (what charity this specific athlete was trying to raise awareness and funds for, how well the dinner or event did, etc.). This meant talking and e-mailing with several professionals, a task that seemed extremely daunting at the beginning of the summer and now seems normal.

My career goals have not changed much, but have only narrowed down. I know that I want to go into public relations, but I would choose to represent a large corporation or an individual as opposed to promoting a celebrity through his or her charitable foundation. I enjoyed the media side, and even working with sponsors to an extent, but I think I would love to collaborate with a team to promote an artist or company through strategies that include press and social media. I enjoyed working to support one specific person at a time, but I can also see myself promoting a large corporation. With the letter of recommendation I have from Ryan

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Altizer, my next internship goal is to find an internship with a large corporation.