

I chose to interview Kelle Cunningham for my Informational Interview. I chose Kelle because she works in the business-side of athletics. My dream job is to work for the Professional Golf Association or Arnold Palmer Tournament Services as an accountant for the company. Because I don't know anyone that works in the golf world, I contacted Kelle because she works for the United States Tennis Association. While I don't have much experience with tennis, I knew that Kelle would be able to provide me insight into how business is incorporated into sports. I also chose Kelle because she is a family friend and I knew she would be willing to meet with me.

Kelle graduated from Pennsylvania State University with an Industrial Engineering degree, and worked for Pepsi in this field for 11 years. She took 6 years off to start her family, and has been working for the United States Tennis Association for 11 years. Her title is Tennis Service Representative, and she works as a customer service representative for tennis for Western Pennsylvania. She played tennis throughout high school and college, and when she was looking for part-time work after starting her family, this opportunity presented itself to her. She worked her way up over the years, and now works full time. She chose this profession because it fit her lifestyle and because she is very passionate about tennis. She loves the game and wants to get as many people playing as she can, and by talking to her, I can tell that she truly loves her job. The flexibility of her job is the best part of her job. She needed a job that was flexible so that she could both attend her children's activities and stay in the workplace. While she liked her job at Pepsi, she said that she could never get herself passionate about any projects she was involved in. Working through the United States Tennis Association, she is excited about going to work in the morning and willingly puts in extra work.

The most important thing to have when you work in the sports industry is a passion for the sport you are in. The field is demanding at times, and if you do not truly enjoy what you are

doing, the busy seasons will not be pleasant. You also have to be self-motivated and organized. Because her position is a regional position, which is very common for this industry, she is the only person representing Western Pennsylvania. She needs to be able to set her own goals for the week or month, and set appointments that both fit into her schedule and work toward her goals.

This position is in a growing field. With the concerns of concussions and other life-altering injuries becoming more prevalent, more people are taking up non-contact sports like tennis and golf. Positions like Kelle's are becoming more important because parents are looking for opportunities to get their child involved in lower-risk sports, and it is important that they know tennis is an option. A big part of Kelle's job is getting people to think of tennis as a competitive sport, rather than strictly a recreational sport. Professional tennis has become a more popular event to watch, and professional tennis players like the Williams sisters, Roger Federer, and Rafael Nadal have brought tennis into the spotlight. Her position has morphed from getting people interested in tennis to getting them involved in competitive tennis. Tennis is not a sport that is going to disappear any time soon, so this position is not going to either.

I really enjoyed the workplace. Her office is in an office park filled with doctors, dentists, and a gym. While the building isn't new or fancy, I really liked the atmosphere. There were cubicles around, but the space felt open and inviting. It was a very relaxed environment. People were dressed in Country Club attire, wearing polos, nice shorts or pants, and tennis skirts. Many of the clients they work with are Country Clubs or exclusive Tennis Clubs, and they are aiming to appeal to their customer's aesthetic. I spoke with several people that worked in the Western Pennsylvania side of the office, as that is where Kelle's desk is, and they were all very friendly and willing to talk to me. I got a tour of the office, and multiple people showed me their favorite things about the building. I appreciated how kind everyone was to me, and I believe their

friendliness is a product of the environment in which they work. Nobody in the office seemed stressed or upset, they all seemed to be enjoying themselves. I saw many people on the phone bouncing a tennis ball up and down on a racket, people playing catch between cubicles, and doing various other light-hearted activities to make their day more fun. Kelle said that the fact their building is worn in allows them to be more comfortable in the space, and not be as worried about ruining a brand new office. This type of environment is what I am looking for when I get a job.

While I am an Accounting major in the Fisher College of business, I consider myself undecided in the Business school. I feel that I won't have a true understanding of what I want to major in within Fisher until I begin taking the specialization classes next fall. Interviewing Kelle allowed me to explore another branch of business, and how it is incorporated into sports. I am certain that I want to pursue a career in sports, and this was the perfect opportunity to explore this career path. While I don't know anything about tennis, and most likely would never take a job with the United States Tennis Association, I learned a lot about the sports industry as a whole. One man I met was relatively new to the company, and had previously worked with USA Baseball in Cary, North Carolina. He told me that USA Baseball operates almost identically to how the United States Tennis Association operates, and was confident that the PGA and Arnold Palmer Tournament Services work this way too. Hearing this reassured me that working in golf would be similar to working tennis, as I liked USTA's atmosphere.

I felt very comfortable in the office's environment. I grew up as a member of a country club, so the dressy-casual attire and aesthetic is very familiar to me. This job is very relaxed and flexible and you could tell just by standing in the room, which suits me perfectly. I eventually want to start a family, and having a flexible job would be helpful to me. I also am very passionate about golf, and strongly believe that it is a useful skill that not enough people are exposed to. Golf is such an

important part of my life, and I know that I would be truly happy pursuing a career in golf. This interview also assured me that I don't have to take a job with the PGA right out of college, I can get work experience somewhere else and come to this job later in life. Overall, this interview emphasized to me how important it is to be passionate about my career. I am fortunate that I am passionate about something that can be a solid, reliable career, and has many employment opportunities. It is far better to do what you love, rather than working for the paycheck.