

Narrative: Reuben Moguel, Equipment Manager, Virginia Tech Athletic Department
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Interviewer: Mackenzie Hanley

I am an equipment manager at Virginia Tech in the athletic department in Blacksburg, Virginia. I grew up in a family with five sisters and three brothers, which made life very interesting, and helped to shape who I am today and the line of work I went into. My parents are from Belize and do not speak regular English. Both of my parents worked while I was growing up, and we were also expected to do work around the house and on the military base we lived near. My parents said if they could do it over again they wouldn't work as much, but at the time they were trying to take care of the family and survive. Because of this strong work ethic surrounding me growing up I decided to go to college and get a degree. During my time in college I was offered a job in the equipment room which would pay my expenses for school. I took the opportunity and that line of work carried me all the way through graduate school and beyond.

This is my third season at Virginia Tech and I have mixed feelings about my job. I get the most satisfaction out of figuring problems out, such as helping coaches and students understand how things are done in my department. I enjoy those kind of things but other than that, being an equipment manager is very mundane. There is not a lot of brain activity that goes into working in this position, and I often become stale and not really motivated. The thing that motivates me is when a coach comes in with a problem and we sit down and I figure out how to fix it.

The main responsibilities of my job are ordering the equipment, figuring out ordering times, and staying on top of when and where you order things. I also keep the budget and keep tabs on how much money each team has to spend. I do not enjoy these small tasks but I do enjoy the interaction I get with the athletes at Virginia Tech. I have worked with athletes at every level and at many different places so there is not much that I haven't experienced or seen. I like working with athletes because there is so much that makes them different than regular students. It's not just from the sport but it's all of the habitual things that come into athletics. The dynamics are completely different at every level. Now that I work with Olympic sports, I also get to deal with women, which is an interesting experience. I have five sisters so I can relate more to female athletes than others in my field.

Although the job is pretty boring, sometimes things liven up in the equipment room, and we are able to see some action. The craziest thing that has ever happened to me on the job was when I worked for the Chicago Bears. A football player came into the equipment room and threw a fit because he did not get a piece of equipment that he wanted. He proceeded to start throwing things around the room and belittling the Head Equipment Manager that I was working with at the time. It was the most bizarre thing ever and was very funny to me because I wasn't the one who had to deal with it, but I had never seen any grown man act like that.

Working as an equipment manager, I have learned to deal with confrontation very well. I am a big communicator and like communicating about problems and like learning how other people deal with confrontation. I handle confrontation by sitting and listening to the person's point of view and then coming back and saying something versus a yelling match. Often times, people think that something is wrong with me because I am so quiet and calm when it comes to confrontation.

I do not think I am well compensated for the amount of work I do and the things that I deal with. You would think it is a well-paid position, but Virginia Tech is kind of behind as far as paying people in this realm as far as in athletics compared to other institutions within the ACC. Although I do not believe I am well compensated, the work atmosphere is great. Everybody gets along, even though there are some people I have more of a history with. My coworkers and I all want the same thing, which is to make more money. We all work well together and cover for each other if someone needs to miss work or go out of town. I also get along really well with all of the athletes, and am most rewarded when they say thank you. That is the biggest compliment you can get working in this position.

I enjoy my job, but I don't love it. I would rather make a transition to academic support or football operations. But I would recommend this line of work to someone just starting, because sometimes it gets you opportunities that other jobs wouldn't necessarily get you. You get to enjoy the benefits of traveling with teams and seeing different places and cities with this job. You also get services working in the athletic department that you cannot enjoy anywhere else. On the other hand, I think it is very difficult to make a transition to something else, even if you want to. People assume you have no skills and the only thing you know how to do is fold laundry. The downside to all of the benefits is that the negatives about the job outweigh the

benefits because you do not get paid enough and you work so many hours, so it is always kind of a struggle.

Family life plays a big role in the amount of time you spend at work in this field. Each manager has four sports that they are in charge of, and all of those seasons run together. On top of an eight-hour workday every day, there are also games you have to work and extra time you have to spend in the equipment room. This affects people who have families at home because they may not be able to spend as much time with their loved ones, and that is a downfall. This particular problem doesn't affect me because I am single and not married, so I can stay here as long as I need to and not have a wife and kids at home who want to see me. This free time also gives me the ability to travel and see interesting countries. I have traveled to Rome, Italy, and Portugal. I work hard so that I can enjoy nice vacations.

Being able to work hard and be successful I think is a small part of the American Dream. I think the American Dream is the same as it was 25-30 years ago. I don't think it is to be rich, I just think it is to be successful. I also think this depends on your definition of success. For instance, my parents' American Dream was to make sure that their kids were taken care of and had the opportunity to go to college. They achieved their American Dream. I think in general terms the American Dream is succeeding in what you do and making a better life for your children. I think that this dream is achievable in today's society, but it takes much more work to do.

As far as following my American Dream, I have a vision of where I want to be, but as you get older so many things in life happen that stray you from your path. Sometimes other opportunities arise and you have to take them in order to go where you want to go. I would like to do a variety of things in the next 5 to 10 years. I want to either teach at the college level or work in football operations or in player development. I ultimately just want to work with students or athletes so whatever is out there, I will do. I am not necessarily set on having a family; it doesn't rank very high for me, but if it happens it happens. But I dedicate more time to thinking about work and where I want to be in the future as far as that goes.

To read the complete conversation, please see the transcript.