With Super Bowl as a backdrop, Tulane Sports Business Conference highlights business side of sports

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Miami Dolphins All-Pro tackle Terron Armstead, right, talks to students as former New Orleans Saints wide receiver Marques Colston, left, looks on at the Tulane Sports Business Conference, which took place at the Freeman School on Wednesday, Feb. 5.

When Miami Dolphins All-Pro left tackle Terron Armstead started to make money in the NFL, he thought he was ready to dive into business. Among his early ventures were a marijuana delivery service (he lost his investment) and an all-natural sports drink (it tasted terrible).

“I was playing business,” Armstead said in an appearance at Tulane's Freeman School of Business on Wednesday. “I thought I was doing real business, but I really

had no idea what I was doing. I was embarrassed to learn how much I didn’t know as an investor — about taxes and credits and about how to not just have money but to keep it and multiply it.”

Armstead isn't playing anymore. Today, as a general partner in a commercial real estate fund, partner in a youth tutoring company, developer of a 40,000 square foot community center in his hometown of Cahokia, Illinois, and president of his own philanthropic foundation, Armstead is embracing the dual role of professional athlete and businessperson.

“When I first got into the league, it was the shut up and play era,” Armstead said. “I love the direction that the NFL is going in [today] where we are starting to allow business to enter the locker room. It’s monumental for the growth and development of athletes but also future business people.”

Armstead was one of three sports business professionals who shared their insights with students and guests at the inaugural Tulane Sports Business Conference. Organized by Freeman students Samson Bennett (BSM ’25) and Gwyn Wineman (BSM ’25) for the week leading up to Super Bowl LIX in New Orleans, the conference highlighted the intersection of business and professional sports.

In addition to Armstead, the panel discussion featured Marques Colston, former New Orleans Saints wide receiver and founding partner of private equity firm Champion Venture Partners, and Denise White, founder and CEO of public relations and marketing firm EAG Sports Management. The panel was moderated by Derrick Strozier (BSM ’14), vice president of JP Morgan Bank and a former defensive back and running back for Tulane and the New Orleans Saints.

“I think it’s awesome what’s happening in terms of the Sports Business Conference,” Strozier said in his introduction. “Outside of being an athlete, there are so many opportunities related to sports, and for current athletes, there are so many things you can get into off the field that are going to be very beneficial to you for the long term.”

Colston, a seventh-round draft pick who played 10 seasons and won a Super Bowl with the Saints, advised students to focus on building transferable skills and to be patient with their career progression.

“Success is relative,” Colston said. “We live in a world where the perception of success is sometimes more important than success itself. It’s really about investing and winning the day. It’s about figuring out how can I continue to get 1% better every day. Sometimes that whole perception of success thing will make us discount our journey, but each one of our journeys is unique and each one of our journeys deserves to be celebrated ”

White, who founded EAG Sports Management 27 years ago and turned it into a powerhouse in the industry, stressed the importance of relationship-building in professional sports.

“If I can impress anything upon you, it’s relationships,” she said. “Meet the people that you want to be. Go and do the internships. Those relationships are so important.”

The panelists described an improving business landscape for professional athletes. Armstead noted that locker room conversations used to revolve around who had the most expensive car or had logged the most private jet flights. Now, they center on who has the most lucrative investments.

“We’re competing on business deals,” Armstead said. “The conversations are changing to where everyone now is more aware and encourages people to seek further knowledge in those things. It’s really just us knowing more about money now than we did back then.”



Members of the Tulane Sports Business Conference pose with speakers following Wednesday evening's event.

The discussion concluded with practical advice for students interested in entering the sports business. Colston encouraged aspiring professionals to focus on the humanity of athletes rather than viewing them solely as business assets, while White emphasized the need to have a passion for the business.

“Someone earlier asked me what would be the biggest piece of advice that I could give, and it would be love what you do,” White said. “There are really hard days in this industry, but I genuinely love what I do and I really care about the guys that I work with.

“Money is great — don’t me wrong,” she added. “But at the end of the day, money doesn’t make my joy in what I’m doing for a living.”

Jeff Salyers, professor of practice in marketing and director of the Freeman School’s undergraduate sports management certificate program, praised the conference and its student organizers.

“The sports management certificate is designed to give students access to industry leaders, events, experiential learning occasions and career opportunities,” said Salyers. “Hosting a five-time pro bowler, a Super Bowl champion and the CEO of a

sports management agency for an in-depth panel discussion moderated by a Freeman alum epitomizes what we’re building in this program, so I couldn’t be more pleased with the inaugural conference.”