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Senior Project Write Up

Internship with Brine and the Boston Cannons

During the month of May, I split my time between working for the Boston Cannons and Brine. I worked at the world headquarters for Brine, which is located in Milford, MA and the front office of the Boston Cannons in Brighton. More than forty men and women staff the Brine office and warehouse. There are twenty or so young men and women who together make up the many different departments at Brine. Groups of two to five people make up each section of the company ranging from product design to marketing. As well, there is a person in charge of each sport who oversees all of the products, events and other issues related to that specific sport. The six person marketing team splits time with each sport; however, lacrosse is Brine's main and most profitable sport. I spent almost all of my time working on lacrosse related tasks because of the spring season and the NCAA tournament over Memorial Day weekend.

The warehouse is home to all Brine products before they reach the sales floor of stores all across the country. At over thirty thousand square feet, the building houses more than two million articles of athletic wear, apparel and equipment. From eight in the morning till six at night, the warehouse is bustling with men and women moving crates, organizing and shipping product. Wooden crates piled high with boxes cover the warehouse except for the rows that are necessary to transport these crates. In a small room within the warehouse, a few men put together helmets. The men screw the pieces together before boxing and shipping the helmets to stores all over the country. As

lacrosse grows nationally, the demand has risen to the point where now, the headquarters and main warehouse have outgrown the space. Over the course of the next year, Brine will be moving the main warehouse to Detroit where they will have more space and be more centrally located to ship all over the country in less than three days. Also, the New Balance world headquarters is in Detroit so Brine will be with its parent company. Presently, it takes a package five days to reach the west coast from Milford and from Detroit, a package can reach anywhere in the country in 2 or at most 3 days.

The company was founded in 1922 by W.H. Brine as a producer of apparel, uniforms and other minor pieces of sports equipment. Not until the 1950s did Brine start focusing on lacrosse, and from there, the company has progressively grown. In the 1960's, Brine started to manufacture soccer balls and equipment and in 2000, Brine came out with a field hockey line. New Balance purchased Brine in 2006, which allowed Brine to enter the footwear industry in both soccer and lacrosse. New Balance technology and cleats are marketed under the Brine name. Similarly, Warrior, the other largest lacrosse producer in the country, is owned by New Balance but Warrior markets cleats with both the New Balance and Warrior logos.¹

The triangle created between Warrior, Brine and New Balance is very odd to many in the lacrosse world because Warrior and Brine are the two largest and most successful producers in the industry and for the two companies to be connected through their being purchased seems strange. However, even after being purchased, both companies remain separate and competition for each other. The only commonalities between the companies are that New Balance oversees both but otherwise, Brine and

¹ I learned the above info. from the Brine staff.

Warrior do their own research, marketing, design and production except for cleats of course, where New Balance helps both companies with separate designs.

At Brine, I worked three days a week, Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. The majority of my time was spent in my own cubicle doing a number of different tasks and occasionally, I helped in the warehouse depending on what my overseers had me doing.

During my first week with Brine, I started by updating the Brine website. I checked, added and edited all of the Dunham's Sports store listings. There are over one hundred and fifty locations nationally all of which sell Brine lacrosse, soccer and field hockey equipment. Next, I updated the events calendar on brine.com. Over the course of the summer, Brine travels to lacrosse, soccer and field hockey events around the country to promote and advertise products. As well, Brine sponsors or is part sponsor of many collegiate and professional lacrosse teams. For the following few days, I spent the majority of my time working on the 2009 Men's and Women's Product Catalog. First, I cut products from the 2008 catalog that Brine is discontinuing. I typed out the blurbs for each item, including the features, sizes, colors and product numbers. For men's lacrosse alone, Brine has more than two hundred pieces of apparel, accessories and equipment. After everything was typed and edited, I formatted the documents and sent them to the catalog company Brine uses.

Returning for my second week, I started by cleaning out one of the trailers and taking inventory of the remaining products after the weekend event. Over the weekend, the truck and trailer went to a lacrosse jamboree in Connecticut where Brine gave away equipment while marketing their products. At most events, Brine sets up a large tent to show products and they have contests and games where they give away equipment. After

emptying the trailer, I began working on the spreadsheet for the summer schedule for the two trucks and trailers. I had to cross reference events, dates and staff to make sure all fit together with no overlaps. I quickly found that a few events needed to be removed from the list because of driving time. For example the All Star game for Major League Lacrosse is in mid July and one of the Brine trucks and trailers is going out there so it will be inactive for 10 days. The trip is 3-4 days driving each way and the weekend event. Now that the trucks have a schedule, I sent the spreadsheets to the drivers to give them a warning of the coming events and summer months. Finally, I began preparing for the NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship weekend by assigning rooms to players, staff and other Brine guests. I created an Excel sheet with room numbers, names, confirmation numbers and dates. Once all the rooms were assigned, I called the Westin Copley Place to register each room under the respective person's name.

The focus of my third week was the NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship Weekend, which was held at Gillette Stadium this year. Brine is one of the chief sponsors of the teams and event as a whole. On Monday morning, I went online and ordered a Budget truck for the upcoming weekend. Then I went to the warehouse to set up three Brine product display stands with another employee. The stands are triangular and around seven feet tall. They hold a number of Brine products including shafts, helmets, heads and other things. All of the pieces come in three large boxes but the assembly is actually quite time consuming because of the many screws needed to hold together the metal structure. Next two employees and I filled goodie bags for guests of Brine at the NCAA tournament. The goodie bags held 3 different t-shirts, a little Brine bag and a mini lacrosse stick. The following day a few employees and I organized crates in the

warehouse for the coming weekend and eventually loaded the two trailers with the necessary boxes for separate weekend events. One trailer went to Lancaster, MA for a large soccer tournament while the other trailer went to Gillette Stadium. On Thursday, four employees and myself drove over to Gillette Stadium to unload boxes and organize the Brine suite for the games over the weekend. We set up an interactive lacrosse area for player demonstrations and then moved inside to the suite where we set up the goodie bags, set up the display stands and did other minor adjustments.

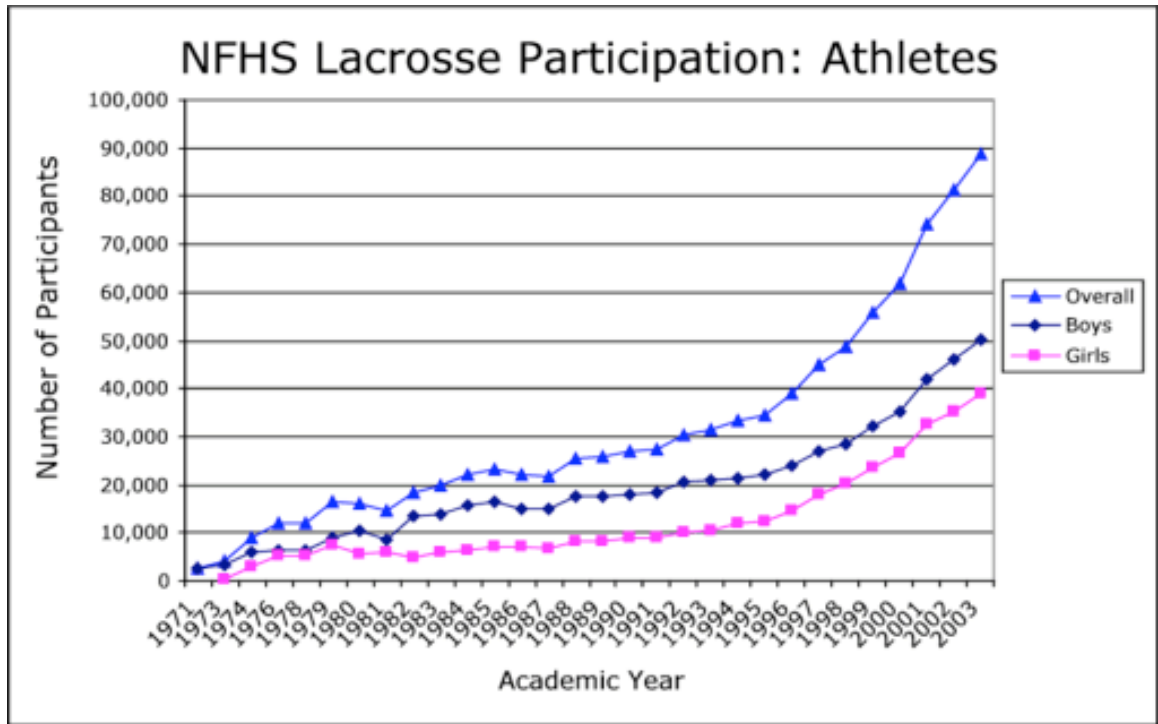
I began another week by unloading a rental truck. The generator, blower, two inflatables, a tent and some equipment needed to be returned to the promotion area. Afterwards, Cathy and I returned the truck to Budget in Franklin. When I returned to the office, Sean and I tested a new soccer ball. Sean is the head of the soccer department and product design. This particular ball had no stitching which makes for a better ball flight and more consistency throughout the ball. We tested samples of the ball made of two different materials. Sean and I concluded the difference between the materials was very marginal but the stitch-less ball compared to a normal stitched ball was noticeable. Instead of stitched panels around the rubber air bladder, the panels are glued so the space between each panel is minimized and the ball is closer to a perfect sphere. When I returned to my desk, I ordered a few pairs of New Balance shoes for the summer staff because all Brine staff are required to wear New Balance shoes. The following day, I organized the promotion room so all of the equipment was easier to access. Plus I filled boxes with certain types of equipment such as arm guards, shoulder pads, and gloves instead of just piles of random gear. To finish my work in the promotion room, I took inventory of a few boxes before loading the trailer with those same boxes for the

weekend event. The trailer left so I went over to the showroom to take down the 2008 products and update the walls with some of the 2009 product samples. For 2009, Brine has about fifty new products between men's and women's lacrosse and soccer. The field hockey samples were not in from the factory yet so that section of the wall remains empty. Otherwise, the walls are covered with new pieces of equipment that will not be shown to the public until December or January.

The internship with Brine and my first real experience in an office setting was incredible. I enjoyed every minute of the three days weekly that I spent working with Brine and their youthful, fun staff. The three people who primarily gave me tasks to work on were Jon Brunell, Kellie Ambrose and Erica Cronan, until she had her baby May 17. My overseers had high expectations but never put pressure on me or pushed me beyond what was reasonable. If not one of my overseers, someone else could always use my help, which gave me the opportunity to experience many parts of the Brine office. For example on a few occasions I worked with Neal Goldman who is the head of product design. I talked with him about Brine products. He was very interested to hear what I thought Brine could do to make their products more appealing and better for high school and collegiate players. Later he explained the different lines of Brine lacrosse and the people that each price point is aimed for. The top line is designed for professional, collegiate and top high school players then the middle line is for high school and middle school players. Finally, the cheapest line is for players younger than high school and the price point is very reasonable. To give you an idea of the price points for gloves, the top gloves cost between 120 to 160 dollars, middle gloves are from 80 to 120 dollars and the beginner gloves range from 50 to 80 dollars. As well, Brine sells beginner packages that are

around two hundred dollars and include gloves, arm guards, shoulder pads and a helmet. Neal explained to me in depth about the different technology, weight, materials and flexibility associated with each line. He also briefly touched on some of his marketing strategies to appeal to players of all ages with limited edition items as well as changing colors and patterns. Right now, he is making colored lacrosse heads instead of the normal white to boost sales and differ from the competition.

As I touched on briefly in my introduction, Brine is moving its warehouse to Detroit in the coming year because of the national growth of lacrosse. The sport has grown tremendously in the past few decades because of technology, marketing and collegiate and professional teams. I experienced the growth of lacrosse first hand because of my work with Jon and Kellie related to the NCAA tournament, which now draws fifty thousand people to the semifinals and finals game on Saturday and Monday respectively. Just fifteen years ago, only about twenty thousand fans bought tickets to the finals game but now that number has grown one hundred and fifty percent. The sport is very attractive to young athletes because it incorporates many aspects of other sports into a fast paced high scoring sport. Below you will find a very interesting graph that shows the growth of lacrosse in high schools across the country.



<http://www.laxpower.com/common/participation03.php>

Boston Cannons:

Related to the growth of lacrosse, Major League Lacrosse began less than ten years ago in an attempt to make lacrosse a national sport and this goal is in the midst of being achieved with teams from San Francisco to Denver to Boston. The league now has ten teams that all play an eighteen game schedule with playoffs in late August. I spent two days a week with the Boston Cannons based out of Brighton. The team plays home games at Harvard Stadium, which is their third home in their eighth season. Originally, the team played out of Lowell then moved to B.U.'s Nickerson Field before moving over to a larger venue at Harvard. On average, between ten and twelve thousand people show up for Cannons home games.

Similar to collegiate lacrosse and the NCAA tournament, Major League Lacrosse has grown significantly in the past few years and expanded from the original six teams to ten teams spanning the country. However, unlike other professional sports, lacrosse players have other jobs because the Cannons can only afford to pay players up to around fifteen thousand dollars for the season instead of the hundreds of thousands and millions of dollars associated with other professional sports. The MLL does only have eighteen games in the season and one practice weekly so the players spend much less time than other sports.

Nonetheless, the six men and women who make up the front office of the Boston Cannons are busy five days a week preparing, marketing and organizing for the games that start in mid May and run until late August. I spent the majority of my time in the office doing different tasks and I worked two game days, helping out on and off the field.

I started my first day in the office by making an Excel spreadsheet with names, addresses, phone numbers and responses to questions like what is your affiliation to lacrosse, are you interested in tickets for Cannons games or getting email updates about the Cannons. These cards were filled out at a Natick Lacrosse event held by the Cannons in an attempt to draw more youth lacrosse teams to games. Next, I got on the phone and started calling Boston area pizza shops to find the best deal for twenty-five pies to be delivered the Harvard after each of the nine home games over the summer. I quickly found that prices are high because of the high cost of flour but eventually I found one place that would charge 7.50 for each pizza; usually, a large pizza costs between eleven and fourteen dollars. In the afternoon, I started contacting prep and private schools around New England to see if the activities offices would be interested in buying tickets

to one of the Cannons games for students. I also updated the information sheets for the office which includes each employees name, extension, email address and cell phone number. The Cannons have five full time employees working in the office and many interns working there over the summer.

The following week I continued to call schools to market the Cannons games or just ask for an email address to contact someone related to student activities. After calling over two hundred middle and high schools, I assembled all of the email addresses and with Kathleen's help, we sent out an email to all of the schools telling them of the group rate and all of the other activities surrounding each game. As well, I answered calls and took ticket orders from my desk. The Cannons also run a summer lacrosse camp for boys ages 8 to 16 so I answered a few calls and signed kids up for the camp. To end the week, I took inventory of shirts and shorts before organizing for the opening game the following day, Saturday May 17th.

After my lacrosse game, I drove over to Harvard Stadium to help set up for the opening game that evening. With the help of other staff, I set up the merchandise tent and organized all of the Cannons gear. Then I went over to the gate to hand out posters, roster, game calendars and player cards to all of the fans as they entered the stadium. Once the game started, I was able to leave the gate to watch the game. I was able to stand right behind the bench on the field, which was an awesome experience for me as an avid lacrosse player. At halftime, I left the field to go help out at the merchandise tent. I sold jerseys, t-shirts, shorts, hats and other apparel with the other staff. The game ended and the merchandise tent was still jammed with customers but once the lines cleared, we took

down the tent and put all of the remaining merchandise back into boxes and returned it to the storeroom. I helped clean up and then was let out around ten at night.

I started the next week by placing orders for more t-shirts and hats for the coming Cannons games. Mikey Powell is by far the most popular Cannons shirt so I ordered two hundred more large and mediums shirts in both green and red. For the rest of the day I did minor tasks helping Joe and Kathleen. On Friday I went straight to Harvard Stadium and started setting up for the evening game. The staff and I started by placing all of the sponsor boards in metal holders along both sides of the field. Then we set up the netting behind both net to stop balls. We tied a few Cannons signs to fences and then went over to the fan zone where we set up the blow up tents for children to play in. In the afternoon, a few staff members and I started handing out Mikey Powell bobble heads to all of the early fans. The free bobble head give away was one of the many promotion events that the Cannons do over the course of the season.

I spent my final week with the Cannons entering raffle cards into the fan-marketing portion of the Cannons computer system. Similar to the Natick youth lacrosse event, I entered all of the information supplied on the cards. These particular cards came from people who entered their names into a raffle at the NCAA tournament at Gillette Stadium. For the final day of my internship, I helped organize the merchandise and player room. The player room houses all of the equipment and gear that the players get whenever something breaks or gets old. The equipment is supplied by Brine, Warrior and New Balance: the sponsors of team.

It was very interesting for me to see the Brine and the Boston Cannons side of the lacrosse industry and market. Both companies are run to make money and gain any edge

possible over competition in order to get a larger market share. Brine has to compete with at least five other companies for the best equipment while the Boston Cannons have little competition. The Cannons are primarily just looking for marketing opportunities and ways to attract fans to games. They are overshadowed by the larger, more mainstream Boston sports teams during the summer, which are mainly the Red Sox. Personally, I would much rather go to a Cannons game because they are a much more interactive and action packed event. Before every game, youth teams from all over Massachusetts play half hour games which start 3 hours before the opening face off. As well before the games, there is the fan zone where there are different give away competitions and games. After the game there is the autograph alley where kids and parents can meet players and get autographs. Finally, the most appealing thing about the Cannons games is that tickets are fifteen or twenty dollars. A twenty-dollar ticket is front row and about fifteen feet away from the Cannons bench. The same ticket at the Red Sox game would be over one hundred and fifty dollars and probably impossible to ever get.

In conclusion, I am happy I was able to pursue these two internship opportunities that proved to be very interesting and a great experience. Both jobs were my first real time spent in any office and because of their relaxed atmosphere; I was not overwhelmed or nervous approaching work. All of the men and women who I worked with made me feel like I was their friend and a full-time employee. At both offices, fellow employees invited me out to lunch and in the end the Cannons gave me some apparel while Brine gave me a few lacrosse heads and shafts. The two internships were a very worthwhile way to spend the month of May and I would gladly work in either office again if the opportunity arose.