

Next Month:
Celebrating Pets!

Healthcare Marketer's

exchange

"Where Healthcare Marketers Connect"

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SPORTS



Dan Adams
Haymarket Medical
Network



Steve Bender
FACTORX



Jay Carter
CG Life



Gail Kaye
Retired Media/Marketing
Director and Consultant



Amy Levinson
A.L.L. Global Media
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Dear Healthcare Marketer,

Happy New Year! We thought we would start this year with a new and exciting topic for *The Exchange* that most of us – either as participants or spectators – are passionate about. SPORTS! Someone pointed out to me recently that although we might be divided as a nation on topics, sports often bring people together from all different backgrounds and viewpoints. I found that an interesting and positive point.



Growing up, our family was passionate about sports. That enthusiasm came from my dad, who recalls listening to the World Series gathered around a radio outside with his friends. Since both my parents were born in Pittsburgh, all sports in my family centered around Pittsburgh teams. To this day, all of my family, including my cousins, are die-hard fans, even though most do not live in Pittsburgh.

I remember when I was 10 years old, we drove to Pittsburgh in anticipation of the 1971 World Series when Roberto Clemente and Willie Stargell played for the Pirates. We stopped at Gettysburg on the way and got a tour with a guide who was quite elderly and had descendants who had fought in the Gettysburg Battle. He led the tour in our own car, where my dad had the radio tuned in to the baseball game the whole time. There were three kids, both of my parents, and the tour guide. Determined not to miss any action, Dad listened to the playoff game while the guy was speaking. How rude – lol!

That World Series turned out to be historical for several reasons. We attended the fourth game, the first game of the World Series ever to be played at night. Plus, the Pirates were the underdogs, but they won the series in seven games. And Roberto Clemente earned the World Series Most Valuable Player Award. All this made such an impression that my confirmation name is Roberta, after Roberto Clemente and my dad, Robert. You may recall that Roberto Clemente died tragically in a plane crash attempting to deliver aid to earthquake victims in Nicaragua.

Isn't it amazing how many of our memories center around sporting events? I could go on and on about my basketball passion, whether it be college, my daughters' playing, or myself for that matter. It's been fun and, in some cases, nostalgic to learn about the sports involvement and memories of fellow industry members, too.

Read on to discover how **Amy Levinson** (A.L.L. Global Media Solutions) discovered and got hooked on Krav Maga. **Dan Adams** (Haymarket Medical Network) tells us about his family's longtime obsession with all things sports, especially hockey, which he's excited about sharing with his kids. When it comes to snowboarding, **Gage Sanders** (AbelsonTaylor Group) chases the storms, including the epic *100 Year Storm* in Jackson, Wyoming. **Gail Kaye** (Retired Media/Marketing Director and Consultant) celebrates the great sports moment she experienced at the AMM Bowling for Breast Cancer fundraiser.

Jay Carter (CG Life) is reveling in the lasting legacy of Notre Dame football games enjoyed during Motor Home Weekend adventures celebrated for 42 years and welcomed by the next generation. **Michael O'Brien** (Executive and Leadership Coach) shares how he beat the odds to return to his passion for bike riding, which culminated in his ride across America. For **Michael Woodland's** (CMI Media Group) family, his daughters' soccer journeys have become a cornerstone of family bonding, memory-making, community-building, and joy. Soccer, golf, baseball and softball, basketball, football...you name it, **Steve Bender** (FACTORx) relished it growing up in a household of three boys, with a dad who was an athlete and coach. Then Steve became a coach and the greatest fan of his two daughters' many sports endeavors.

I love reading these stories of family and friends bonding over sports. It makes me want to get out there and play a round of golf...or curl up inside on a cold Sunday afternoon and enjoy a basketball game. Can't wait for March Madness. Maybe in this New Year, you'll choose a sport to take up or follow along with that's good, wholesome fun, entertaining, and even builds relationships.

Happy and Healthy New Year,

Nancy

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- Reunions
- Memorials

Send your submissions to Nancy at NALeonard@HMExchange.com or call 973-420-1192 to discuss.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ONWARD & UPWARD

promotions • additions

Area 23 has announced the following appointments: **Daniela DeStefano** as Vice President, Strategic Planning Director; **Michelle Spear** as Vice President, Account Director; **Felipe Munhoz** as Executive Vice President, Executive Creative Director; **Trish Norris** as Senior Vice President, Group Strategic Planning Director; **Meena Larijani Bloom** as Senior Vice President, Strategic Planning Director; **Wynn Saleeby Bello** as Vice President, Account Director; **Matthew Choe** as Vice President, Associate Creative Director; **Drew Mihalik** as Senior Vice President, Management Director; **JP Tinker** as Vice President, Management Director; and **Mackenzie Kistler** as Group Copy Supervisor. Promoted at the company was **Kreg Henritz** to Vice President, Account Director. **Kreg** can be reached at Kreg.Henritz@area23HC.com.

CMI Media Group has announced the promotions of **Ashley Lindner** to Supervisor, Engagement Planning, **Lauren O'Donnell** to Senior Analyst, Paid Social, and **Johan Rodriguez Hidalgo** to Senior Analyst, Data Analytics. Joining the company were **Shyam Desai** as Senior Vice President, Engagement Strategy; **Jocelyn Burton** and **Laura Hadfield** as Associate Directors, Engagement Strategy; **Caleb Crump** as Manager, Business Process; and **Hannah Cates** as Director, Paid Social.

Conexiant has announced the appointment of **Gina Bencicasa** as Account Executive, Digital Advertising Sales, and **Monique McLaughlin** as Director of Business Development, JNCCN Advertising Sales. They can be reached at Gina.Bencicasa@conexiant.com and monique.mclaughlin@conexiant.com, respectively.

CrowdPharm has announced the appointment of **Jill Beene** as President.

CultHealth has announced the appointment of **Chloe Morse** as Senior Project Manager.

Eli Lilly and Company has announced the appointment of **Kyle Cooper** as Associate Director of HCP Omnichannel Media.

EVERSANA INTOUCH has announced the appointment of **Eva Febo** as Senior Project Manager. She can be reached at evaegraef@gmail.com. Promoted at the company was **Ashley Oberle** to Account Director.

FCBCure has announced the promotion of **Skylar Jimenez** to Vice President, Account Director.

FCB Health New York has announced the promotion of **Kevin Fabrizio, PhD**, to Senior Vice President, Group Medical Strategy Director. Joining the company were **Sarah Hart** as Account Director and **Sean Lisowski** as Vice President, Management Director. **Sean** can be reached at [sean.lisowski@me.com](mailto:lisowski@me.com).

Heartbeat has announced the appointment of **Valentina Dao** as Associate Director of Agency Experience. She can be reached at vdao14@gmail.com.

Horizon Media has announced the appointment of **George Paredes** as Senior Analyst, SEM.

Imre has announced the addition of **Haifa Barbari** as Executive Vice President, Strategy and Customer Experience, and **Joe Macera** as Senior Vice President, Group Creative Director, Copy.

Initiative has announced the appointment of **Jessica Post** as Negotiator, Digital Partnerships.

Inizio Evoke has announced the promotions of **Gabriela Ching** to Account Director, **Madison Monka** to Media Manager, and **PJ Murray** to Vice President, Creative Director. **PJ** can be reached at pj.murray@inizioevoke.com. Joining the company was **Matt Brennan** as Vice President, Client Partner.

Ionis Pharmaceuticals, Inc., has announced the addition of **Neil Keene** as Director, Omnichannel Integrated Experience and Engagement. He can be reached at nkeene@ionis.com.

IPG Health has announced the appointment of **Beth Paulino** as Director, Corporate Communications and Public Relations, focused on Internal Communications. She can be reached at beth.paulino@ipghealth.com.

Klick Health has announced the appointments of **Erica Gusler** as Vice President, Media Strategy and Integration, and **Alexander Levine** as Senior Vice President, Oncology Business Lead.

McCann Health Managed Markets has announced the appointment of **Brianna Burke** as Associate Director, Resource Management. She can be reached at blburke13@gmail.com.

MedSynapse has announced the appointment of **Matt Soccorsi** as Vice President of Sales. He can be reached at matt.soccorsi@medsynapse.app.

Merck has announced the appointment of **George Brunner** as Executive Director, Global Cardiovascular Marketing, and **Jamie Lawlor** as Director, Global Employee and Executive Communications.

Novartis has announced the appointment of **Michael Carrizal** as Director – Research and Analytics. He can be reached at mcarrizal@gmail.com.

PeerDirect has announced the appointment of **Chris Gallagher** as Senior Sales Director. He can be reached at Chris.gallagher@peerdirect.com.

Pfizer has announced the appointments of **Katie Giesecke** as Senior Manager, Media Measurement and Optimization, and **Hannah Klein** as Senior Manager, U.S. Consumer Respiratory Vaccines Franchise.

Publicis Health Media has announced the appointment of **Eric Camejo** as Supervisor.

Razorfish Health has announced the appointment of **Danielle Avellino** as Account Director.

Response Media has announced the appointment of **Shannon Doyle** as Media Director and Strategy Lead.

SOLVE(D) has announced the appointments of **Victoria Takala** as Director, Media Strategy, and **Brittney Callender** as Media Supervisor. **Victoria** can be reached at Victoria.takala@solved.health.

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

awards • mergers • approvals

Azurity Pharmaceuticals has received U.S. FDA approval for Danziten™, the first and only nilotinib with no mealtime restrictions indicated for adult patients with newly diagnosed Philadelphia chromosome positive chronic myeloid leukemia (PH+ CML) in chronic phase and adult patients with chronic phase (CP) and acute phase (AP) resistant or intolerant to prior therapy that included imatinib.

Biocon Biologics, Ltd. (BBL), a unit of **Biocon, Ltd. (BIOCON)**, has received U.S. FDA approval for Yesintek, a biosimilar to Johnson and Johnson's Stelara. Yesintek is approved for the treatment of Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, plaque psoriasis, and psoriatic arthritis.

Novartis is paying \$1 billion upfront for global rights to PTC Therapeutics' midphase Huntington's disease program, helping the biotech bounce back from disappointing data on another program.

Syndax Pharmaceuticals has received U.S. FDA approval for Revuforj® (revumenib) as the first and only menin inhibitor for the treatment of relapsed or refractory (R/R) acute leukemia with a lysine methyltransferase 2A gene (KMT2A) translocation in adult and pediatric patients one year and older.

UCB has received U.S. FDA approval for BIMZELX® (bimekizumab-bkxz) for the treatment of adults with moderate-to-severe hidradenitis suppurativa (HS). BIMZELX is the first and only approved medicine designed to selectively inhibit interleukin 17F (IL-17F) in addition to interleukin 17A (IL-17A).

Zevra Therapeutics, Inc., a commercial-stage rare disease therapeutics company, has received U.S. FDA approval for Miplyffa™ (arimocloamol) capsules as an orally delivered treatment for Niemann-Pick disease type C (NPC). Miplyffa is indicated for use in combination with miglustat for the treatment of neurological manifestations of NPC in adult and pediatric patients two years of age and older.



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SPORTS

Celebrating the Journey of Youth Sports

BY MICHAEL WOODLAND

Soccer has been a cornerstone of our family's life since Sophia, now 13, and Juliana, 11, laced up their cleats at just five years old. What began as weekend games on local fields has blossomed into an extraordinary journey through competitive soccer, filled with moments of joy, growth, and even a few tears. Today, my daughters proudly play for SJEB FC, a South Jersey-based academy team, where their talents have taken them to fields across the country to face some of the nation's best teams.

MUCH MORE THAN A GAME

From the first practice to the latest tournament, the journey has been about far more than just the game. On the field, Sophia and Juliana have found not only teammates but a second family. Together, they've learned the importance of trust – whether it's making a crucial pass, stepping in defensively to cover a teammate, or offering encouragement after a tough play. Each game and training session strengthens their bond, fostering a unique camaraderie that goes beyond the field. These experiences have instilled values like teamwork, perseverance, and respect, shaping who my daughters are as athletes and as people.



Juliana in action.

The path of competitive soccer, however, is not without its challenges. Balancing school, training, and games is a constant juggling act for them – and for us as parents. Early mornings, late nights, and countless hours on the road have become the norm, but so have the priceless moments: watching their skills improve, witnessing their resilience after setbacks, and sharing in their triumphs, large and small.

MEMORABLE MILESTONES

Our family has been fortunate to experience some unforgettable milestones recently. Juliana was invited to play in the prestigious SuperCopa in Texas, a tournament that gathers the top 51 youth teams in the country. Against fierce competition, her team battled their way to the finals. In an electrifying championship match, they fell just one goal short of defeating a powerhouse Dallas FC team. Though the result wasn't what we hoped for, the

experience was invaluable – filled with grit, camaraderie, and pride.



Celebrating tournament wins.

Sophia's journey took her to Florida for her first Girls Academy Showcase at the renowned IMG Academy, one of the nation's top high schools for athletics. Competing against elite teams, she demonstrated her growth and determination, thriving under pressure and soaking in the atmosphere of a high-stakes event. Watching her navigate this new level of play was a proud moment for us as parents, a testament to her hard work and love for the game.

A NETWORK OF SUPPORT

The beauty of soccer extends far beyond the pitch. Off the field, team dinners, road trip sing-alongs, and post-game celebrations have become cherished rituals. Whether it's laughing together over a meal or lifting each other up after a tough loss, these moments create bonds that last a lifetime. Soccer friendships often spill into everyday life, forming a network of support, encouragement, and shared memories.

For us as parents, this journey has been as much about our growth as it has been for our daughters. Competitive soccer demands sacrifice – of time, energy, and even comfort – but the rewards are immeasurable. Watching Sophia and Juliana evolve into strong, confident, and passionate young women is worth every early morning, every long drive, and every ounce of effort.

Ultimately, this journey isn't just about the trophies or accolades. It's about the lessons learned, the relationships built, and the joy of watching our daughters chase their dreams. Soccer has given our family countless memories to cherish, and we can't wait to see where the next chapter takes us.



Juliana taking a shot on goal at the State Cup Championship game.

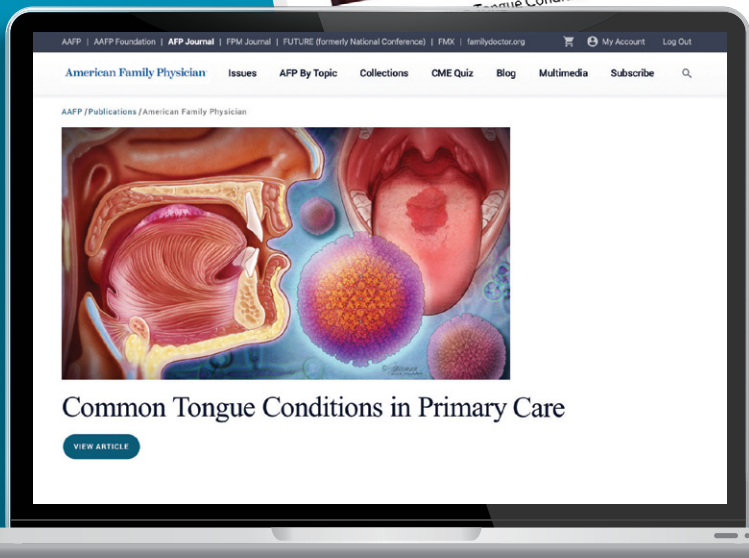
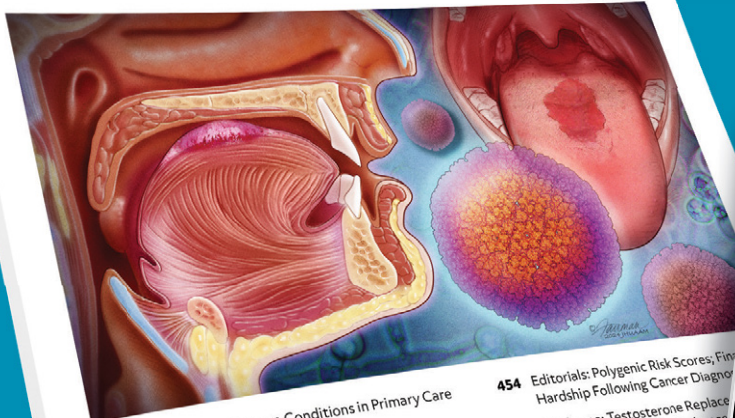


Michael Woodland is Analyst, Data Analytics, CMI Media Group. He can be reached at mwoodland@cmimediagroup.com or 856-667-8577 (P) 856-479-9907 (Direct).

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- 454 Editorials: Polygenic Risk Scores, Financial Hardship Following Cancer Diagnosis
- 464 Cochrane: Testosterone Replacement Therapy; Mindfulness-Enhanced Parenting Programs
- 527 PPIP: Screening for COPD
- 533 FFIN's CI: Diet and Risk of
- 535 Diagnostic Tests: Using... in Screening Mammography
- 542 POEMs: UTIs in Children; Postpartum Depression; Bacterial Vaginosis
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SPORTS

Realizing a Dream: CYCLING ACROSS AMERICA

BY MICHAEL O'BRIEN

I was the last kid on my block to come off training wheels. The other boys teased me and called me a baby, but I wasn't ready. I was scared to fall.

Then, on an early summer morning, I got on my Schwinn Junior Sting-Ray and flew down our driveway. I darted onto the road. Luckily, no cars were coming, and with the wind in my hair, I felt I could go anywhere.

I saw my bike as a ticket for adventure, even if it was just to the end of our street. My parents wanted to keep me close. As I grew older and got my first job as a paperboy, my bike was with me. When my friends started to drive, I saw an article in Rochester's *Democratic and Chronicle* newspaper about the TransAmerica Bike Route. By the time I finished reading, cycling across the country became a dream of mine.

During high school and college, I started racing my bike every day and took it on vacations and other trips. I even thought about buying a foldable bike to make it even easier to cycle during my corporate travel, but one of these trips would change my life forever.

BIKING DREAMS DASHED

During my pharma company's offsite meeting in New Mexico, a Ford Explorer hit me head-on during a training ride. It was traveling 40 miles per hour. I broke almost everything, and my trauma team told my wife they had no idea how I survived. When I came out of the intensive care unit, my doctors said I would never ride again and painted a grim picture of my future.

THE JOURNEY BACK

Through multiple operations and countless hours of physical rehab, I eventually got back on my bike – though I was shaky and probably could have used my old training wheels. Determined, I took small steps day in and day out. Over time, because this is how we change, I found my balance, started riding further and faster, and allowed myself to return to my dream of cycling across America.

Although I was recovering miraculously, nobody except my wife thought I could go coast to coast. They told me I should just be grateful for my progress and not push too far. They insisted that I give up on my dream.

Over the years, I returned to bike racing. Admittedly, I was cautious. The thrill of being on the podium wasn't

worth the risk of a high-speed crash. But I was still pinning on a number and trying to squeeze every drop of juice from the lemons I received that morning in New Mexico.

KEEPING MY EYE ON THE PRIZE

Initially, my New Mexico trauma team predicted that both knees would need replacement in five years, given the severity of my injuries. Through a disciplined plan, I delayed my left knee replacement until 20 years later (and my original right knee is still going strong). In 2021, I underwent total knee replacement surgery and, since we are all special in our own way, received a custom-made knee and a more intense physical rehab program. It wasn't as painful as my rehab in 2001, but it was still a doozy. What kept me going was the idea that I would cycle across America in 2022.

On June 14, 2022, I was in Astoria, Oregon, near the Pacific Ocean and Columbia River with my wife, our two dogs, and a rented RV called Mayzee. I was ready to pedal the same route I read about as a kid, The TransAmerica Trail. It would take us through Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Kentucky, and Virginia, though by Rawlins, Wyoming, we rerouted – which is a story for another day.

Along the way, I met other cyclists from as far away as Switzerland and those riding solo or part of a larger team. They all had different perspectives on why they were cycling across America.

PERSPECTIVE MATTERS

When we shift and open up, possibilities emerge. I could have easily remained a victim of my accident. I could have labeled it "My Worst Day Ever." But during my recovery, I discovered that everything is neutral until you label it. We get to choose our labels and where we place our attention because, ultimately, we go where our eyes go.

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

If you've never seen all of America, let me tell you – it's a big country. Heck, it took me five days just to get through Kansas. Her natural beauty is jaw-dropping. Katherine Lee Bates was right when she wrote *America the Beautiful* with the words, "O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain, for purple mountain majesties, above the fruited plain."

(Continued on page 9)



Starting in Astoria, Oregon, with our RV Mayzee.



Finishing at the Lincoln Memorial.

SPORTS

Realizing a Dream *(Continued from page 8)*

Her people are also beautiful, like those I met in Mocha Moose Coffee and Antiques in Rushville, Indiana, or those ringing their cowbells as I cycled into Yellowstone. As I rode across our country, I saw our great wealth and absolute poverty and felt our joy and strength, as well as the anger and pain that shows up as othering.

On my last day, I rode through Antietam National Battlefield and took my last pedal strokes toward the Lincoln Memorial. It was fitting to finish in Washington, D.C. It's where my wife and I met and started our family. All around, there are symbols of our history, which is not perfect, as I experienced along the way, but it's worth fighting for. Today, I love America more profoundly and have resilient hope and optimism that we can heal, come together, and realize our dream of becoming a more perfect union.



Michael O'Brien is an Executive and Leadership Coach, and former pharmaceutical executive. Today he supports healthcare leaders to help them create a vibrant culture and superior results. Michael can be reached at michael@pelotoncc.net. Discover more at www.michaelobrienshift.com.

My Prized Prize

BY GAIL KAYE

Anyone who knows me won't be surprised by the fact that I never won a sports award or trophy in my youth – but that all changed about 20 or so years ago. That's when I participated in the AMM Bowling for Breast Cancer fundraising event. I don't recall many of the details, but I do remember that it was lots of fun and filled with camaraderie and laughs.

I and my teammates worked hard to make strikes, spares, and avoid gutter balls. And, by the end of the evening, we thought we did pretty well. To our astonishment, this feeling was confirmed when we were asked to come up to accept our award!! What????

Lo and behold, we each received a trophy bearing the title, "LOWEST SCORING TEAM!" I couldn't have been more proud, lol! I cherish my trophy to this day, enjoying a glimpse as it sits in grand splendor on the bookcase near my desk.



My cherished trophy.



Gail Kaye is a Retired Media/Marketing Director and Consultant. She can be reached at 201-424-1957 and Tollhouse29@hotmail.com.

Training in Krav Maga

BY AMY LEVINSON

Krav Maga – most people don't know how to pronounce it, let alone know what it is, so here's a little help. It's pronounced "kraahv Muh-gaah," translated from Hebrew as "contact combat." Essentially, this is an Israeli-founded form of self-defense. This art is designed for all ages and physical capacities as we are taught and trained to strike vulnerable targets – as the best form of defense is an effective offense – enabling a "90-pound weakling" to defend themselves against a "250-pound brute."

So, how did I get into this? It happened while strolling on the beach in Tel Aviv in 2008 with one of my college friends. She pointed to a group of people working out on the beach. She said, "Those guys are training in Krav Maga. You should check it out. You'll probably like it!" I said, "Krav ma- WHAT?" I made her repeat herself three times and spell it because I had no idea what she was talking about.

When I got back to NYC, I looked it up. Fortunately, I found my current school and decided to take a class. I ended up having to go alone because NONE of my friends had any interest. After getting through the first 15 minutes of "warm-up" without totally embarrassing myself or running off the mat crying like a baby, I realized I was hooked. So, I bought a three-month pass, which quickly led to me signing up for an annual subscription. And yes, I am currently actively training.

So, if you're interested in learning something new, check out www.kravmagafederation.com. Read about the history of the art as well as my master instructor and mentor, Rhon Mizrahi. Nothing says therapy after a stressful day at work like kicking your friend in the nuts – consensual, of course!



Amy Lev Levinson at Rhon Mizrahi Krav Maga Federation.



Amy Levinson is CEO, A.L.L. Global Media Solutions. She can be reached at 917-301-8215 or amy.levinson@all-gms.com.

HOCKEY – A FAMILY LEGACY

BY DAN ADAMS

I grew up in what some would call a sports-obsessed family. With five siblings, we were involved in all sports, from baseball, football, and basketball to soccer, lacrosse, and tennis. The one sport, however, that we were really obsessed with was hockey. This, despite the fact that none of us ever played in a formal league (not counting my current adult roller hockey league). It was the game that brought us all together as a family.

EARLIEST MEMORIES

One of my earliest childhood memories revolves around hockey. When I was three or four years old, I would be home with my mom while she was getting ready for the day. I'd "play" in our narrow hallway. I would hit a real puck up and down the hallway and slam myself into the boards (the walls). Apparently, when asked what I was doing I would respond, "Playing at the Quebec Center" (we lived in New Jersey). To this day, the molding on my mom's hallway is covered in tiny black marks from the puck I used.

POND HOCKEY

Although we never played formally in a hockey league, what we did do was play sunrise to sunset and, later, every chance we got on the lake we grew up on. That lake is where our dad taught all of us in turn how to skate, with tiny double-runner blades and a stick for balance. It's where we would play until our feet and hands were numb. We would play until we could no longer see the puck because it got too dark. Instead of going inside, our dad would "borrow" our neighbor's electricity and hook up floodlights so we could play long into the night. We've now started the tradition all over again, teaching nieces and nephews and soon my four-year-old and one-year-old to skate and love the game as well.

Before my dad passed after a long cancer battle, he would take walks around the lake, always keeping his eyes peeled for a pair of bald eagles who would fly around the

lake. It was one of the things he looked forward to every day during that time. The day after his funeral, we were once again playing hockey on the lake. As the sun went down and no one seemed to want to stop playing or just being on the lake where we spent so much time together, one of those bald eagles came out for one last flight around the lake. It was a perfect moment (captured by one of my sisters) and a way to enjoy the lake with our dad one last time.



Emilia and me at a Devils game.

NEW JERSEY DEVILS

When it comes to hockey, there is no way I could go through an entire article without mentioning our love for all things New Jersey Devils. Many memories have been made through games in East Rutherford and now Newark, NJ. The first game I remember going to, my dad and uncle took my siblings and our cousins. I was too young to remember anything about the actual game, but remember having the time of my life and loving the action.

Seeing the Devils win Game 7 of the Stanley Cup finals in 2003 was one of the best nights of my life. Another fond memory is taking in the Home Opener in 2014, the day after getting married to my wife and the morning before we left for our honeymoon. Everyone was shocked we went, but it was a great game. More recently, seeing the Devils beat our hated rival NY Rangers in Game 7 of their 2023 playoff series will always stick out, along with the party outside the arena afterwards.

NEXT-GENERATION HOCKEY

Passing on my love of hockey and the Devils has been one of my favorite experiences with my four-year-old daughter and one-year-old son. We actually announced to my family that we were expecting our daughter outside the rink during a game. Emilia loves going to games, even if she still doesn't quite pay attention the whole time. She is asking to learn how to ice skate, which will happen this winter. Jack is already watching when Daddy puts games on TV. He even had some Devils-themed First Year pictures. I can't wait to bring him to his first game and create memories with Jack and his sister!



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SPORTS

Building a Lasting, Life-Altering Tradition

BY JAY CARTER

On October 22, 1983, three friends and I began a tradition that was replicated for the 42nd time on November 9. Freshly minted MBAs from Notre Dame that past May, Dave Valenti, Mike Burton, Dave Wirl, and I rented a motor home and traveled to South Bend for the USC/Notre Dame football game. It was a rainy evening, seasonably chilly, and the Fighting Irish prevailed 27-6.

We told people we brought cold beer with us to evangelize coeds while we tailgated, but mostly we just reveled in being out in the working world and sharing stories. We met up with other recent alums and ended up at a party somewhere in South Bend that none of us can remember how to get to, ending the evening at a local diner. It was so much fun

that we promised ourselves we would do it again the next year. The Motor Home Weekend tradition began.

WORTH REPEATING

Interest peaked in 1984 when, for Motor Home III, we rented two RVs and brought 24 cases of beer for ourselves, 20 friends, and, of course, evange-

lism. The motor home stopped being part of the show in the middle '90s. Fortunately, by then, I had purchased a home in nearby Michigan and that became our meeting place...but it was still the Motor Home Weekend.

BECOMING A FAMILY AFFAIR

There is much to be valued about sports traditions. It seems to me that most of the successful ones are about replicating a vivid coming-of-age event. I'm sure that is what happened with the four of us. In the early years, we dreamed

of having our kids go to school at ND and join us for the tailgating...A glance at the photo for the November 9 FSU game shows we made that happen. That is likely the greatest joy to be drawn from this event...It's truly a family affair.

In 2017, we lost one of our number to complications after surgery. Of course, all of us attended the funeral. It seems every member of Dave's family and friends knew of the Motor Home Adventure. It was truly heart-wrenching.

Those friendships have become more and more permanent and encompassing. This January, Rhonda and I will travel to Las Vegas to watch the Eagles at the Sphere with Mike Burton and his wife Doreen. In June, we'll celebrate the nuptials of Dave and Annemarie Valenti's son DJ (ND 2015). It's truly a family affair.



Motor Home Crew, November 9, 2024. It's a tad chilly in South Bend, but our crew of 16 endured the cold and enjoyed a 52-3 victory over FSU.



Motor Home "founding fathers" David Valenti, David Wirl, Mike Burton, Jay Carter.



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SPORTS

Sports – A Lifetime of Bringing Family and Friends Together

BY STEVE BENDER

My intention for the article I had in mind for the Sports Edition of The Exchange was a story about my and my oldest daughter's connection through sport.

As I thought about it a little more, I realized the impact that sports has had on my family as a whole.

Starting with my dad, Tom Bender, who was a minor league pitcher, phenomenal fast-pitch softball pitcher (played against the four-man touring team The King and His Court twice), coach of everything (regardless of whether or not he had any experience in the sport), and all-around decent athlete. I am the youngest of three boys. Let's just say that the Bender yard/house was always full of gloves, bats, cleats, skates, sticks, basketballs, soccer balls, and footballs. Sports were in our blood, and we were constantly battling it out with each other.

1984

My dad always hoped that one of us would go on to play at the college level but that didn't seem realistic when we all stopped playing after high school. Much to my surprise, prior to my senior year, my school St. Francis College (University now) announced it was instituting a Men's Soccer Team and tryouts were being held.

After a three-year hiatus of not touching a soccer ball, I decided to lace up for one final season. I was thrilled that I made the team and prior to our first game, I learned that I was chosen to serve as Co-Captain for the inaugural season.

Our first game saw us pitted against St. Bonaventure, the defending Conference champions. The night before the big game, my roommate asked me to predict the final score. I told him I would not be surprised if we lost 10-0, which would be an ass-kicking in any world but even more so in the soccer world. When we returned from the

long day and even longer bus ride home, I plopped myself onto the couch. My roommate brought me a beer and asked how close I came to my prediction. My response was, "Nailed it to the tee!" Yup, we got smoked 10-0, the largest defeat I've ever experienced on the soccer field. Nobody ever said that rebuilding a program was going to be easy. Looking back, it was cool to accomplish something that not only made me proud but also made my dad proud.

1986

You don't always have to be playing sports to appreciate them. In '86 I spent two weeks prospecting my ophthalmology accounts in the Tampa area, which happened to coincide with Spring Training. A college buddy of mine was teaching high school English and was on Spring Break. So I encour-

aged him to fly down and spend some time with me and told him that I would pick up his meals on my expense account.

We had a blast and ended up attending a Mets/Reds game. My buddy is quite the talker. Before you know it, we were in the Reds dugout about two hours before game time talking with Dave "Cobra" Parker. For those who care, Pete Rose was the Manager of the Reds at the time. Fun fact, my buddy has gone on to serve as the agent for current Phillies Manager Rob Thomson, Joe Torre, and a variety of other athletes. Let's just say that I'd highly recommend hanging out with the C students as they're way more fun and can still accomplish plenty in the business world.

1990s

After college, I continued to play pickup hoops, but it became tougher and tougher to find 8-10 guys who just wanted to get on the floor, break a sweat, and throw up a few jumpers. Not to mention, two young daughters and a wife certainly put a crimp in my free time.



Me, my dad, Jim Kelly, and my all-time former Sixer, Andrew "The Boston Strangler" Toney.



40 years later... My college roommate and his son with me and my wife on the Swilken Bridge on the Old Course at St. Andrews.



Me and my buddy with recent Hall of Fame inductee Dave "Cobra" Parker, 1986.

(Continued on page 13)

SPORTS

Bringing Family Together *(Continued from page 12)*

So, I decided to pick up a new hobby, one that doesn't take up too much time and is relatively inexpensive – GOLF! And yes, that's sarcasm right there. My boss, Tom Bender, was an avid golfer so he didn't mind if I spent a little extra time out on the course as long as I was out there with a client or prospect. Over the years, my dad and I had the pleasure of playing more than 75 different golf courses across the United States and in Scotland together, even winning a few tournaments along the way. Some of my favorites were the Donald Ross Memorial Tournament (Carnoustie, Scotland), New Jersey State Golf Association's Father/Son (Blue Heron Pines), and the Team Championship (Tavistock). I keep a Carnoustie towel on my bag as a gentle reminder of Dad's influence.



Tom and Steve Bender winning the NJSGA Father/Son.

2000s

The 2000s brought a whole new vibe to sports as I quickly became a coach/spectator/fan of my two daughters' escapades. We raced like most families from soccer fields to gyms to lacrosse fields to recitals and beyond! Not only were they playing sports during every season (soccer, crew, hoops, volleyball, and lacrosse) with many seasons overlapping, our kids played on high school and club teams at the same time... you know the drill.



Bender girls on same team and high-fiving each other.

I was literally out the door by 5:00 a.m. (Janis Cohen is a demanding boss!), made a few calls in Manhattan to salvage my job, and then hustled cross town to fight Turnpike traffic back down to South Jersey so I could be on the soccer field to coach the ever-powerful *Cyclones* by 7:00 p.m. My wife and I both coached different teams. As luck would have it, when their team played at Home, we were Away, and vice versa. This pattern of Home/Away continued for about five years!

Thankfully, when the girls were in high school, they played on the same lacrosse and hoops teams, which was absolutely thrilling from both a spectator and carpool perspective. Seeing our kids high-five each other as they were introduced, seeing our older daughter pass to our

younger daughter, watching our youngest daughter qualify for Nationals, and then seeing them compete is something that's tough to put into words. While it sounds exhausting, and it was...I know my wife and I wouldn't have traded a minute of the craziness during those years. As long as your kid/s are enjoying their hobbies, there's no greater excitement than watching them excel at the sport/s they love.

BONUS YEARS

Every once in a while, you get blessed with something that you're not expecting. While I always wished we had a son, that feeling subsided quickly when both of my daughters expressed an interest in sports at an early age.



NEC Conference Championship game.

Our oldest daughter was very comfortable on the athletic field and graduated from high school with 12 Varsity letters. She received a scholarship to play lacrosse at Wagner College and went on to a four-year career, serving her final two seasons as Captain. Some of my favorite highlights include seeing her introduced on the big screen as a freshman at an Away game at Villanova (yeah, I'm a Philly guy), seeing her play in an NCAA Conference Championship game, getting my picture taken with one of my favorite athletes of all time during my alumni soccer game while she happened to be on campus for an Away game!

PRESENT DAY

I'm pretty much stuck on the golf course today, but that doesn't mean I don't get to enjoy sports anymore. They just hit a little differently. Whether you're competing or just enjoy being a fan, soak up every minute 'cause you never know when that special moment is coming your way. For now, I'm okay with a little time on the bench!

Hey, Sports – thanks for the memories. Please keep 'em coming!



In the Phillies dugout with my buddies waiting out a rain delay.



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SPORTS

Chase Your Storm

BY GAGE SANDERS

Last winter, I got to experience what Jackson, Wyoming, has dubbed the *100 Year Storm*. I am an avid snowboarder and always have been ever since I moved to Connecticut from Florida when I was six years old. I grew up shredding only the East Coast (shout-out to Mt. Killington, The Beast of the East!) and didn't get the opportunity to snowboard out West until my early 20s. During that first trip out West, I became obsessed with the big mountain experience. Steep lines, tree runs, big air...I wanted it all! Since then, I've spent my winters with friends exploring the best mountains the American West has to offer. And this brings me to my experience with the *100 Year Storm*.

THE BIG STORM

Jackson Hole is known as one of the gnarliest mountains in America for its steep and expert terrain. I had been before, but I had never snowboarded in snow deeper than my boots (at any mountain for that matter). So, when I heard that a big snowstorm was coming in the same dates of our trip, I was giddy with joy.

The day we arrived, there was a light snowstorm dusting the mountain and surrounding village. Since we arrived in the early afternoon, my buddies and I wanted to get a few warm-up laps in before what we thought was going to be the best day of our lives. These few laps ended with us being on the last tram ride up to the top because the conditions were simply too good to pass up. In my head I'm thinking, "It's supposed to get better than this? We'll see!"



Scenes from waiting in line the first day of the new snow. Unfortunately, no laps that day.



Quick hike up the headwall face on Day 4 of the trip. Needed to wait for some bootpack in the snow before making this hike. Otherwise it would have required snowshoes.

EARLY TO BED

After throwing back a few Rocky Mountain Kool-Aids at the local watering hole, my friends and I decided to call it a night. That way we could be bright-eyed for the day to come. Trying to sleep that

night was like being a kid again trying to fall asleep the night before Christmas morning. A few tosses and turns later, our tightly packed hostel room soothed itself to sleep with the sound of four late-twenty-something-year-olds snoring away. Nothing could have prepared us for the snow we were about to experience the next day.

JAW-DROPPING SNOW

The clocks struck 6 a.m. the next morning and the sound of snores turned to four iPhone alarms ringing simultaneously. We all understood the mission – no friends on powder day. We got up, changed into our base layers, and threw our Gore-Tex-laden gear on. We opened the door to our hostel and our jaws dropped immediately. The parking lot looked like a scene from a high school prank. Cars were buried in snow with four feet of snow on top. No one was going anywhere.

Oozing with excitement, we grabbed our boards and skis and sprinted over to the lift line in hopes of getting first tracks on the mountain. At this point, there was over five feet of new snow from the night before and snow was still falling!

Because of this, our excitement was met with bitter news from the lifties. Lifts were delayed because ski patrol was still clearing snow off the lifts at the top of the mountain. And they were still avalanche bombing to make sure the mountain was safe to enjoy. No estimate on when the lifts would open was given.

WAITING IN LINE

Time went by and energy was still high in the lift lines with cheers after every bomb at the top of the mountain went off. As we waited, we saw ski patrol come down the mountain and over to the lift time and time again. These guys and gals were absolutely caked in snow head to toe, and everyone wanted a piece of it! At one point, when a patroller came down, someone in the lift line yelled, "Hey! Save some for the rest of us!" This was met by a somewhat bitter reply from the patroller, "I mean it's a ton of fun, but incredibly dangerous. We can't even clear the lifts fast enough. As soon as we move to the next lift, the lift we just cleared is already covered in snow again."

CLOSED FOR THE DAY!

My heart sank with this news. The possibility of there being TOO much snow finally hit me. And after waiting

(Continued on page 15)

SPORTS

Chase Your Storm *(Continued from page 14)*

in line from 7 a.m. to a little after noon, it was finally announced the mountain would not open for the day. This has only happened three times in the mountain's history. I was devastated. It felt like every trip I had been on I missed the snow by a week. It would dump the week before, then I'd get there and the conditions would be okay. Or, I would get to a mountain and then the next weekend they got record snowfall. All-time bumper would be an accurate way to describe the mood. Fortunately, the snowstorm was supposed to slow over the course of the day and that night. So, we headed back to the local watering hole (shout-out to all the fine people who work at the Mangy Moose!) with our heads held high from the confidence of knowing tomorrow was going to be our day.

Fast forwarding past the debauchery of the bar scene at a mountain full of powder-hound kooks looking to get some of the best laps of their lives in (use your imagination)

READY TO GO AGAIN

The next morning our alarms simultaneously rang again at 6 a.m., although we were a bit slower to get out of bed this morning... not sure why (but the Mangy Moose sure does). Same routine as the morning before. Throw the gear on and run to get in line. Luckily, because everyone at the mountain indulged

like a glutton the night before, my friends and I were practically first in line. We saw a patroller and I mustered up the strength to ask what the sitch was for today. He said there was only going to be a small delay but because the snow had stopped late the night before, they were making good progress. And he ended his sentence with, "Oh, and don't worry, there's still a TON of snow up there."

I've never been so excited in my life! Stuck in line knowing what was waiting for us at the top of the mountain was like drinking five Red Bulls in the library. I was going to explode. After about an hour of waiting in line, my excitement was finally satiated when the liftee dropped



Look at all that snow!



Me (left) and my buddy Matt (right) gearing up for a few warm-up laps on Day 1.

the velvet rope and began loading people onto the lift. My thoughts immediately felt like the fire drill episode of *The Office* telling myself and friends to "STAY F*CKING CALM!"

While on the lift, I couldn't believe it was happening. Jackson Hole had just gotten 66 inches of new snow, and it was about to be

all mine. As the gondola reached its peak, the doors slid open and my friends and I immediately stepped into our meticulously planned effort to get to the most remote side of the mountain where the most snow and least people would be. We strapped in, pressed play on our playlists, and we were off!

UNBELIEVABLE SNOW

The first turns of that run left me in a state of shock. I had never snowboarded in anything this deep before. Six-plus feet of snow! After a few more turns, I stopped to take my headphones out because I wanted to be more in touch with my surroundings. As I sped back down the mountain my ears were filled no longer with music, but with some of the best sounds a snowboarder could hear. Screeches of "YEWWW" or "OH MY GOD LET'S GOOO" from friends and other boarders and skiers filled the air. This was the feeling everyone was chasing. And I truly believe there is no other feeling like it. Racing down a steep ungroomed trail, avoiding obstacles, and catching air into fluffy pillows of powder.

I could finally snowboard like there was a respawn button. True freedom. My friends and I skied first chair to last chair with only one bathroom break that day. The conditions were simply too good to pass up. It's easy to think this was going to be the peak of my snowboarding career, but I know there's another storm out there waiting for me. There has to be.

Either way, I wasn't quite sure how to end my story and this felt like an insane overshare. But I hope you enjoyed! (I was told to keep this story to between 200-300 words and I'm 1000+ words over that.) Moral of the story, keep chasing your storm. Live in the moment once you finally catch it. Then keep your eyes forward on the next storm!



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