

‘Never a Dull Day’ at UGA Athletics

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As the associate athletic director of sports communications at the University of Georgia, Claude Felton is known as the sports info “extraordinaire.” With 25 years of experience in the Georgia Athletic Association including the job of sports communications director, Felton’s resume includes a variety of experiences unparalleled with most other sports information directors around the country.

When asked the reason why he decided to go into sports information, his reply was that he was a sports fan from the very start. As young a man, he played basketball as well as other numerous sports. Majoring in journalism, he also worked in the newspaper. The journalism degree that he received from UGA’s Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication helps him in the many articles and tons of writing that he has to do everyday. The exposure to writing also helps him to deal with and study the UGA cases of today. He also has a degree in public relations. In his first job, he worked in journalism at Georgia Southern University. His job there also was public relations in the college’s athletic department. During his time in that position, Felton developed a love for working on a college campus.

In college sports, various scandals and events can arise at any given moment and time. Where other may dislike dealing with these issues, Felton doesn’t mind them. “There is never a dull day in this job,” said Felton.

The biggest sport scandal that Claude Felton has ever dealt with was the Jan Kemp case in which Jan Kemp, a UGA professor, brought a lawsuit against the university alleging that she was being denied promotion and raises. Kemp claimed that workers in higher-level positions above her were giving athletes -- who were also in her development studies class -- preferential treatment. In this class, athletes were allowed to pass from her class into harder courses regardless of whether they were ready for it or not.

As you know, along with scandals and cases arise the media. Watching what you say and do to the media is very important in Felton’s line of work. According to Felton, the number one most important thing to do when dealing with the media is, “Always tell truth. The truth may be not appealing, but it is what’s right. Readers and listeners look to you as their source of information. If trust is lost somewhere between the reader and the writer there is no turning back. Along with the truth, you also have to ask yourself if there are any legal issues involved. If so, think about what you are going to say before you say it and if not, the best thing to do is to portray your department of work with as much optimism as you possibly can regardless of any conditions.”

Although dealing with the media can sometimes be unbearably nerve-racking, Felton insists that he loves this part of his job too.

According to Felton, a typical day in the sports information field consists of preparing and wrapping up events and sending requests to the media. “Normal days in the sports information

department are long and event-oriented. Working days are always non-routine and unpredictable. Most of the workers in the Butts-Mehre Building (UGA's athletic association building) work a total of approximately 70 hours each week."

The two things that Felton enjoys most about his job are being on a college campus, and working with sports. Pertaining to Athens, Felton loves the fact that it is a true college town and it's close to home for him. It is also small enough for a college atmosphere but big enough for the benefits of a larger town.