



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

September 24, 2024

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Dave Pitt, Senior Director, Partnerships, Tepper Sports & Entertainment

by **Rick Handford**

Andy Dinkin introduced Dave Pitt, the Senior Director of Corporate Sales for Tepper Sports & Entertainment. With a career in sports spanning nearly two decades, Dave Pitt has worked or consulted for NFL, NBA, MLS, MLB, NHL, NWSL, and Premier League teams to build strategic and business-accelerating partnerships with iconic brands like Google, Mercedes Benz, United Airlines, DoorDash, Dropbox, and EA Sports.

Dave spent his formative years in Maine, and then went south where he was a walk-on soccer player for Rollins College. After college, he spent three seasons with the Orlando Magic, then joined the Golden State Warriors where he led a transformational departmental shift in sales and strategy that drove partnership revenue increases of more than 10x during his eight seasons in the Bay Area. He also played a key role in the opening of the Chase Center in 2019 which was celebrated as the most successful corporate partnership season in NBA history.

He has been in his current role for about eleven months, heading a sales team focused on building thought-leading partnerships with local, regional, and national brands to leverage the excitement of the Carolina Panthers, Charlotte FC, and Bank of America Stadium.

Dave lives in the Ballantyne area with his wife, Ashley, son, Brady, and dog, Rudy. Not commonly known is that he has four siblings, all girls.

Dave began his talk with kudos to Thomas Moore, telling him he was welcome to keep playing in the background for as long as he would like. He then talked about the Panthers win over the Raiders in Las Vegas on Sunday (their home opener), and how well Andy Dalton had played in the game, leading the NFL with over three hundred yards passing and three touchdowns, the only QB to achieve that this season. Not only did the offense find its footing, but the defense played inspired football in the 36 – 22 victory.

He had an excellent weekend, as he was able to watch on his phone the Saturday game in which the Charlotte Football Club defeated the New England Revolution by 4 – 0. This kept them in the playoff race with a chance to host a playoff game in only their second year of existence.

He and his wife moved the family from the San Francisco Bay area to Charlotte about four years ago, a decision that he described as “easy” given Charlotte’s location and rapid growth. The city has a young population and is adding some 130+ people per day; it is a magnet for sports and cultural events; and tourism in Mecklenburg County generated some six billion dollars in revenue last year.

Charlotte sports has another big advantage for someone in his line of work—most sports teams can only market in an area within a limited range around their location, but the Panthers and CFC can tell their stories effectively throughout North and South Carolina.

He talked about the cultural impact of the game of football, which draws more spectators than any other sport in the USA—not only to the NFL games on Sundays but also to the college games on Saturdays and the high school games on Fridays. 205 million people describe themselves as NFL football fans. An average of 16.5 million people tune in to each NFL game, whether it is Thursday, Sunday, or Monday. The next closest in TV viewership is NCAA football, with 3.5 million viewers per game, followed by the NBA with 1.1 million. In the United States in 2022, of the 100 most-watched television shows, 88 were NFL games.

The Panthers are celebrating their 30th year as a franchise this year, and while that seems like a long time, we are still the second-youngest franchise in the NFL, with only the Texans being younger. Some of the oldest franchises in the NFL started in 1920, so they have been around for 105 years. And while there have been some years that turned out badly, note that 4 of the 32 NFL teams have never been to a Super Bowl, and three more have only been once. The Panthers have been to 2 Super Bowls in their young life. And there are lots of good things happening around this team right now.

He then went on to the other football, the one he played in college. There are 4 billion soccer fans in the world, with 270 million soccer players in 200 countries. Cricket is second, with 2.5 billion, followed by Hockey with 2 billion.

In 1994 the US hosted its first World Cup Tournament games, and after that event, soccer participation in the US went up by 33%. Now soccer is everywhere in this country, and Pitt believes that when the World Cup returns to the US in 2026, soccer is likely to have another large growth spurt. MLS has been on a tear for the last decade, and the Charlotte Football Club has played a big part in that over its short lifespan. Average attendance is thirty thousand for CFC, second in the League, compared to 22 thousand average attendance across the League. A CFC game is an experience not to be missed.

He then went on to discuss the Bank of America Stadium, which is currently hosting some 40 major events and attracting 2 million attendees in a year. NFL and college football, international soccer matches, and highly popular music concerts. All of these events showcase Charlotte as a great place to visit, with lots of fun and exciting events. The stadium will undergo a major renovation over the next five years, which will transform it into an even more impressive asset to the City.

The Tepper organization also is focused on a greater purpose, to lift up and support the community, just as the community supports the teams at their events. More than \$22 million has been donated to charitable organizations in the City, and a total of \$44 million across the two Carolinas. And this does not count the thousands of hours donated by team members and staff of the organization.

What the organization seeks to do is create connections and memories for the patrons. Sporting events and live performances are unique events, and the outcome of the games and the actions of the performers cannot be known ahead of time. There is an excitement in being there and seeing what happens that cannot be matched. Dave Pitt likes to think of what they do as “Emotional Transportation”, taking people to a different emotional place than where they were before the event, one that they can return to in their memories.

In response to questions, he noted that he has worked for extended periods at the NBA’s Orlando Magic and Golden State Warriors and has consulted with every major league organization in the country, probably 15 to 20 different teams. He has taken the job with Tepper Sports because he believes that it has more potential upside than anywhere else.

He discussed the renovation plans for the Stadium and noted that while he was not in charge of the design people were working hard to provide a positive experience for every customer, and that quiet places to get some respite from the noise and highly kinetic atmosphere of many events would most likely be a part of that.

He noted that there were a lot of Panther fans in the Stadium in Las Vegas and the atmosphere was great, especially because we were winning.

Finally, he expressed that finding and engaging in successful partnerships included finding people who will be invested in the success of the partnership, who share common ideals and have a natural connection in the things that both organizations do well, and who will be thoughtful and creative in how they approach the story that they tell so that both sides benefit.

Our thanks to Dave Pitt for a most enjoyable and informative presentation.

A recording of the meeting can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/1012944307>
The presenter's introduction begins at approximately 26 minutes and 35 seconds.