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Athlete accountant: Dual careers in H&S, a panel discussion with Grady Alderman, Bill Heath & Rollie Wormstead

Grady Alderman

William G. Heath

Roland C. K. Wormstead

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APPENDIX

'ACCOUNTANT'

Dual Careers in H&S.
A panel discussion with
Grady Alderman,
Bill Heath & Rollie Wormstead

If you could pick from two different ways of life, each of which has its own particular attractions and advantages, what's the best thing to do? Why, practice both of them, of course! Three Haskins & Sells staff accountants are leading just such double lives. Their success is as much a tribute to the flexibility of the Firm as it is to the men's own sense of dedication and responsibility.

The three men are professional athletes who have parlayed their talent and liking for the rationality and the order of the accounting profession into a rewarding off-season career. When they put on their business suits and report to work with the Firm, they carry in with them a fresh breeze from the world of outdoor sports that is enjoyed by the Firm for half the year and remembered by sports-loving clients the year around.

Grady Alderman, 31, has been with the Minneapolis Office from roughly January to July each year since 1963. Bill Heath, 30, has been with the Houston Office for three winters. Rollie Wormstead, 43, joined the Boston Office in 1955, working there from late fall to spring.

The rest of the year these three accountants take off their neckties. Rollie puts on sports clothes and a fresh tan to continue a 15-year career as a teaching golf pro. Bill Heath, in pro baseball for eleven seasons, wears the uniform of the Chicago Cubs. He is a catcher who is also valued as a left-handed

pinch hitter. The 235-pound Grady Alderman, in the pro football game since 1960, looms even larger in the heavy padding and uniform of the Minnesota Vikings, playing offensive tackle on the National Football League champions.

All three of our H&S athletes are candid about sports as their first love; they are lifelong athletes who overcame great odds to be admitted to the elite who make up professional athletics. Yet they do not give short shrift to accounting, a profession they thoroughly enjoy in the days when the cheering stops. They joined H&S in order to put their off seasons to good use and to prepare for long-term careers after the early retirement that comes to those whose assets are tied up in athletic prowess. In discussing their dual careers with *H&S Reports*, they all noted that public accounting is peculiarly suited to their needs because its peak demands come during the layoff season from their sports.

Bill Heath was a member of the University of Southern California's national championship baseball team in 1958. He waived offers from the Yankees and White Sox in order to finish school, finally signing on with the Phillies in 1960 upon graduation. After suffering the ball player's typical up-and-down career of big league to minor league—he played with the White Sox, Houston and Detroit organizations, among others—he was expecting to play last season for Tacoma on the West Coast. Then he got an offer from the Cubs in May 1969 which he was reluctant to accept at first, because he feared he would be sent down again a short time after uprooting his family. However, after joining the Cubs as backup catcher and pinch hitter, and catching Ken Holtzman's August 19, 1969 no-hitter against the Atlanta Braves, he looks forward to several more seasons with Chicago. Unlike our other two athletes, Bill did not major in accounting or business in college, but rather took a degree in education. He has taught science and math, and got into accounting through a correspondence course he took in an effort to profit by the daylight hours that come with night ball. Bill eventually made successful contact with the Houston Office when he was playing with the Houston Astros.

Rollie Wormstead was head pro of the Duxbury Yacht Club for the last eight years, the fourth club he has served in Massachusetts as a golf professional (teacher) and professional golfer (tournament performer). A regular competitor in pro-amateur tournaments, Rollie has done well in a number of well-known tournaments, including seventh place in the Massachusetts Open of 1969, fourth in the Rhode Island Open, second medalist in the 1958 Massachusetts Open. He has also put accountancy to work in golf, most notably in a seminar he conducted to instruct golf pros on how to operate their club shops on a truly professional basis. Rollie organized the golf team at Boston University, and graduated in 1950 with a business administration degree. At first golf was his sole occupation, but this changed one winter when he accepted an offer to teach business

courses at a local high school. He decided there must be a better way to earn money during the off season, so he began interviewing with public accounting firms. His search ended at the H&S Boston Office, where he found the late Arthur Koelbel, partner in charge, was happy to employ him during the winter months.

Grady Alderman graduated from the University of Detroit with a degree in accounting just in time to begin his pro football career with the Detroit Lions, playing guard with them for one year. He then moved to Minneapolis with the expansion pool when the Vikings were organized. Fortunately, he linked up with the Minneapolis Office after interviewing with H&S in Detroit. Grady says he interviewed with only two firms. He was put off by the executive of the other firm, who expressed doubt that an athlete could combine two careers.

EDITOR: Grady, you've been playing professional ball since '60 and have been with H&S since '63. How would you say the two-occupation career for these years has worked out?

GRADY: Quite well for me. It's certainly nice to know that after the football season ends I don't have to go scratching around for a job like some of the fellows. I always know I have something to go to, something I enjoy and something, in particular, with a future. A lot of the fellows—particularly the education majors—they have a difficult time finding a job. No one wants to hire them for five or six months. I think most of the guys on our team now are at the point where they're thinking, "What am I going to do when I retire?" They'd like to look at a job with growth potential.

EDITOR: Bill, how has it worked out with the Heath family with you having one income in the baseball season and

one in the public accounting season?

BILL: As far as the transition from one season to another, it's beautiful. The baseball season coincides excellently with the accounting season. Financially, there is a tremendous transition when you go from big league baseball, where you are earning pretty good money in a very short time, to a starting accountant's salary. You find that you have to live on a dual standard. In the summer I'll buy personal things that I would never think of buying in the winter.

EDITOR: What about you, Rollie?

ROLLIE: It's been great. H&S has been extremely fair with me as far as promotions are concerned. It's given Betty and me a chance to build some equity... Today I know that I can send my two daughters through college, and this is a direct result of being able to have excess savings during the winter months. When I'm working for

H&S I just forget about the monthly retainer from my club, so we can fund it, invest it, or use it for home improvement or whatever.

EDITOR: Do you find athletics a benefit in your work at H&S?

BILL: Oh, definitely. I think most men are interested in sports that they play, wanted to play or did play. And they love to hear inside information about sports. Now, in a way, this causes difficulty because they want to sit and talk about baseball. I'm torn sometimes, because a client and I sit and talk over coffee. You ask yourself what are you going to do? They know you are sitting on their time and their money, and yet you cannot be rude about the thing. A number of times I just dodge them or go where they cannot find me.

GRADY: It seems that clients are much more congenial when they know you're in sports. I've seen people get quite short with some of our accountants. I guess we are kind of a pain in the neck when we're doing an audit. But I've never run into that problem. Everyone has always been very congenial to me. You run into people who want to talk sports. I try to discourage it but there is always the noon hour and coffee time, and I certainly don't mind. But, occasionally, when it appears that it is going to interfere with the work, well, then . . .

ROLLIE: What a great entree sports is when you go into an office and your first step is to go in and meet the treasurer. The difficult thing—and one of the most self-conscious things—is that I have tried to avoid a lot of the clients who know I'm a golf pro because when one does find out, the next thing you know he gradually works his way over to my desk and says, "I understand you play golf, Rollie" and from there it leads into a lengthy conversation.

I might add a little story here. A couple of years ago I had just come back to the Firm the first of November and had been on my first assignment for a week. One of my business contacts invited my wife and me to dinner. Shortly after we got there, he said, "Rollie and Betty, the reason we invited you over tonight was not only to have dinner but to see what you think of our idea. We'd like to take you both down with us to the Ocean Reef Colony Club, at North Key Largo. If you would, just come down to Florida with us and spend two weeks and we'll play golf together." "Oh," I said, "I can't do that. I've been back at H&S for a week and I think it'll be a terrible

imposition." But he convinced me to ask Del Edens, the partner in charge of the Boston Office. I did, and Del Edens said, "Rollie, if I ever had that opportunity, I'd take it myself. Don't be foolish. Go ahead and take a leave of absence. I'm sure the job will still be waiting for you when you get back." Well, Betty and I went down there and this guy and I played an average of 42 holes of golf a day. Admittedly, he was a millionaire and it didn't hurt him that much. But again what a great thing this game of golf is and also what great people, as far as Haskins & Sells is concerned, to be broadminded enough to appreciate that here was a great opportunity for anybody.

BILL: In 1968 I was working on an audit at Petrotex Chemical Corporation and was asked to do the inventory. It was the first time I was asked to do anything like it. These were bulk chemicals, piped chemicals and truck chem-

icals. They come in by rail and you do not see any of them because they are all gauged and measured through pipes. You can see the difficulty when they may want 30 per cent of one product piped and then 30 per cent of another. When a major raw material is going into a system, there may be three byproducts coming out at the same time. You do not see them physically. Well, I had had some exposure to this because I had studied chemistry in college for two years, and I was really interested. And, because I was a ball player and they knew I was a ball player, this one guy who headed the department showed me step by step. Every question I had, he was more than happy to take time from his work to show me all the things I needed and answer all my questions. I found the controller there was happy to help me, partly because he was a baseball fan

and I had brought out an autographed baseball for his son.

EDITOR: Grady, at what point did you realize that you were going to have a pull between athletics and the profession that your college courses were heading you for? When did you begin to think about being a professional football player?

GRADY: Oh, all along. I think even when I was a high school player. Of

course, you never know at that age whether you are good enough, or whether you'll be lucky enough to get chosen. Things just worked out that I was able to do it. I wasn't that sure about what I wanted to do, other than to play professional football. Although my degree was in accounting, I didn't know if I wanted to be a public accountant or go into private enterprise. So there wasn't much of a conflict—all

I knew was that I wanted to be a professional athlete. And then, after I thought more about my accounting career, I decided that the only way to go was public, if for no other reason than to get the certificate. I decided that after athletics I would have to do something and public accounting appealed to me the most.

EDITOR: I suppose sports were always in your blood, too, Bill.

BILL: My whole family was sports-minded. My dad played semi-pro and some pro baseball. My brother played professionally for one year. I just sort of grew up in an atmosphere of athletics and professional sports, you may say. It was just inborn really.

EDITOR: When did you first decide that you wanted to be a golf player for life, Rollie?

ROLLIE: I think it was probably when I was about ten years old. At that time I had been caddying about a year and the game intrigued me. Maybe I was a little bit precocious at that age, as far as the game was concerned, because when I stepped up to hit a golf ball I could hit it better than any kid my age . . . I remember I used to go out in the evening, all by myself, and carry on a little soliloquy where I was Red Barber and he was introducing me coming up to the first tee playing in the finals in the National Open, and it came right down to the last hole and I was leading by a shot and I was able, though I made one mistake on the last hole, to recover with a fantastic putt, to still win the National Open. If you haven't experienced a dream along these lines as a child—when you become famous in a particular sport or whatever avocation you might have—I think you've missed something in life.

EDITOR: Are you able to turn your mind off H&S completely for the summer and can you turn your mind off golf while on the job at H&S? Is there a mental conflict?

ROLLIE: I think that's a pretty strong word, conflict. I don't think you can turn off either one. Take the summertime. I subscribe to *The Wall Street Journal*, read it every day. I get the

Journal of Accountancy, too. Because I spend so much time giving lessons, I certainly can't devote the amount of time that I'd like to to accountancy, but at least it's always on my mind.

EDITOR: You can't get it out of your mind, but it is not a conflict?

ROLLIE: No, it's not a conflict. In fact I would say they are really very compatible.

EDITOR: What about you, Grady? Do you find it takes a while to readjust to being back in the office after the football season?

GRADY: I think in January I'm ready to go. Six months of football is an awful lot. You get awfully tired. I'm ready for accounting and, of course, it's a challenge just as football is. Every time you go on a new audit it's a challenge to do a better job than was done before.

EDITOR: Bill?

BILL: I don't think that any person is so small that he can't divide himself between the two. More and more people can divide their time; we see more and more moonlighting . . . There's definitely a changing of gears, you might say, that occurs. You don't just step right out of your baseball uniform and put on a coat and tie and become a different type of professional person. I would say it really takes me a month to make the full transition. And the biggest transition is in the use of the lan-

guage, not so much vulgar language, as just expressions used in baseball that other people don't know. Like last year it was 'What's your action?' meaning 'Whaddya doing?' or 'Howya doing?' or 'Where are you going tonight?' And you'll catch yourself during the accounting season saying something like that to one of your fellow employees, and he'll give you a strange look.

EDITOR: What advice do you three pros have to offer the young fellow in college who is aiming for a professional sports career and also preparing himself academically?

ROLLIE: The first is, I would be honest with myself. With a little introspection, I would try to determine whether or not I was really good enough to follow that sports profession. You may be pretty good, but when you compare yourself with other really good ones in the field you may be only mediocre. If you just *think* you are good, you'd better hesitate a little. The genuine test is how well do you do in competition—your experience where you're actually competing. Look at your record. If you really see yourself as a winner, then go ahead. But get that education, too. You will need it.

BILL: There are a lot of kids that sign up with baseball clubs for not an awful lot of money and they end up regretting it later on. But I have always main-

tained that education is a very vital thing to any individual. So my suggestion is that if they want to play, if they are good enough, if they have enough offers, and if a scout wants to give them a large bonus—from \$50,000 up—they can go ahead and sign at the end of their sophomore year or preferably after their junior year. A lot of boys are signing contracts now where they are required to go back to school to get the rest of their bonus, which is a stipulation you can write into your contract. I think baseball decided it would be a good thing to write into a contract, to force the kid to go to school to get the rest of his money, because so many of them didn't. Baseball doesn't want to take kids away from college. They need it and it's good for them; it makes a better individual, a better professional. In the minor leagues, you see, you can go right back to college when the season is over and get in a full semester.

GRADY: I think the young man should prepare himself in his business career as best as he can. Stay in school and concentrate on that and the athletic career will take care of itself. If the opportunity arises to play professionally in any sport, it's going to be there regardless. The earlier they learn what they want to do, the better prepared they are and the sooner they're prepared for it . . . You know, not too long ago—perhaps in the 50s—there were still a lot of professional athletes turned football bums. These guys just lived from season to season, and off season they didn't do a thing, just spent their money. Now I think that most of my teammates are preparing themselves for their retirement in some form or another.

EDITOR: And now that you have passed the CPA examination, Grady, you are really not facing retirement. You are just starting a new phase of your career in public accounting.

Thanks to all three of you—Bill, Rollie and Grady—for taking part in this panel discussion on the dual careers of professional athletes-accountants. You men prove that some people in this life can have it both ways. □