



THE INSIDE PITCH 2026 January Edition

THE PERFECT GAME FOUNDATION® is a 501(c)(3) Non Profit that was created in April of 2011 to assist those who aspire to a working career in sports.

From April 1, 2011 to now.... Year 15 Winds Down with Work Under Way For TPGF Golf #14 on July 13, TPC Potomac!

Welcome to The Inside Pitch for January published by Sanah Hathiramani!

The Perfect Game Foundation began work on April 1, 2011 with the Mission to help those who have chosen a career path in sports. To date, TPGF has had the privilege of helping over **400** Fellows from all over as they began (or continued) their journey.

They have come from schools across the country, from diverse backgrounds and functional aspirations.

TPGF has been honored to have been able to assist these Fellows with mentoring, career planning, networking, assistance finding internships and projects to enhance their resumes and support/assistance in the job search effort.

Today you'll hear from The Inside Pitch Publisher Sanah Hathiramani along with regulars Ben Hoffman with Ben's Byline, Julia Boller with some thoughts on freshman year in college, and Wade Pinkerton.

Also, you hear from new Fellows Cade Cricchio and Evan Eckert!

In Their Own Words



Cade Cricchio

My name is Cade Cricchio and I was born and raised in Gainesville, Florida. As a senior at Florida State University on the Women's Tennis team, it is exciting to begin the next chapter pursuing a career as marketing strategy analyst in partnerships within the sports industry. Having two internships at Nike, I have learned extensively what it means to build a brand behind an athlete.

With highly competitive internships automated by artificial intelligence, it is challenging to be put in a position to reach the face-to-face interview stage. The opportunity to learn from Del is unmatched as he has propelled my connections and confidence in pursuing a career in a highly saturated industry.

Grateful for the opportunity to learn from TPGF, it's Fellows and Del as I dive into this next chapter. After only a few short weeks with the Foundation, I have gained invaluable mentorship, extensive connections and resources specifically for opportunities we discussed. Through our conversations, it has been exciting to pursue a marketing strategist career and be specific about my internship search. Thank you, The Perfect Game Foundation, for the support and belief that the team instills into aspiring professionals in the sports industry.



Evan Eckert

St. Louis Cardinals baseball is the thread that connects generations of my family. My grandma worked in the Cardinals' front office for eight years in the 1990s. During those same years, my dad worked at Busch Stadium as an usher and for a few years in the Cardinals' front office as a "runner."

Since I was little, I've heard so many of their stories and have been fascinated by the game, specifically statistics. I've owned a lawn-mowing business for several years, and while I'm pushing the mower, I'm either listening to baseball podcasts or a Cardinals baseball game. I'm that guy who lives on YouTube highlight reels and the Baseball Reference website, and my "party trick" is to look at a page of stats, scroll through the numbers, and tell you who that player is.

Good or bad, the numbers tell the story. Knowing how to interpret analytics is integral to a sports team's success. That's what I want to do.

While I was in high school, I was also enrolled in the Texas Bioscience Institute, a dual-credit program through my local community college. That allowed me to graduate with my associate degree before earning my high school diploma. College math and statistics classes helped me realize that I wanted to pursue sports analytics. My goal is to graduate in spring 2027 from Howard Payne University (Brownwood, Texas) with my bachelor's degree in sports management and then take the next steps to working in sports analytics.

Thankful to be connected to Del and The Perfect Game Foundation. I believe that my conversations and mentorship with Del/TPGF will be key to mapping out my future, including seeking an internship with a professional sports team for summer 2026.

Very excited to learn all that I can through The Perfect Game Foundation and its Fellows, meet as many people as possible, and gain the hands-on experience that will take me to the next level.

Julia's Corner

Hi, Julia Boller here, a freshman at Virginia Tech. Instead of "Julia's Captures" for this month, this will be writing about my experience at Virginia Tech heading into the second semester of freshman year, and also what I did over winter break!

Virginia Tech has been great, and last semester closed on a positive note, which I am very satisfied with. I am excited to attend men's basketball games next semester and to get more involved in intramural sports! Also, excited to start the next semester, and am happy about my class schedule, as this semester I have some classes with friends! Over winter break, I visited one of my friends from Virginia Tech in Chicago and had a really wonderful time exploring the city! Picture taking for my high school's girls basketball team was on the agenda, and it felt really great to be back in that atmosphere again. With free time this coming semester, looking forward to doing more research and gaining insight to sports statistics regarding the basketball team, and hopefully joining some more clubs that revolve around this idea!



Ben's Byline



Hello, my name is Ben Hoffman, and I'm a 19-year-old freshman at James Madison University. In my last article, I covered the NBA season, and this month I'll be focusing on the NFL playoffs. The 2026 postseason has already delivered excitement, drama, and some surprising results that fans won't soon forget.

Fans are on the edge of their seats as exciting Wild Card games kick off the playoffs. The Chicago Bears overcome the Green Bay Packers after falling behind, while the Buffalo Bills narrowly upset the Jacksonville Jaguars. The Los Angeles Rams defeat the Carolina Panthers, and the Houston Texans defeat the Pittsburgh Steelers 30–6. A thrilling Divisional Round with high-stakes games is set up by these victories.

The New England Patriots take on the Houston Texans in the AFC, the Seattle Seahawks take on the San Francisco 49ers, the Rams take on the Bears in the NFC, and the Denver Broncos host the Buffalo Bills in the Divisional Round. Dramatic plays, crucial passes, and strong defensive stands emerge in every game. Only four teams are left, all competing for a position in Super Bowl LX as the Conference Championships draw near.

Every remaining team has a genuine chance to win the championship as the playoffs are nearing the peak. As players make great plays and unforgettable events happen, fans are on the edge of their seats. With every game, the postseason's drama and intensity increase. Who do you think will win the Super Bowl?!

Wade's Watch



The Los Angeles Dodgers have become the most controversial team in baseball, with many fans arguing that the franchise is actively ruining competitive balance in the MLB, while the organization insists it's simply just playing the game, the growing gap between the Dodgers and the rest of the league has sparked debates about whether baseball desperately needs a salary cap.

Unlike the NFL or NBA, Major League Baseball operates without a hard salary cap. Instead, teams are limited only by a luxury tax threshold, which wealthy franchises can exceed by paying financial penalties. For teams like the Dodgers, backed by massive revenue streams, global branding, and ownership willing to spend, these penalties function more like an inconvenience than a restriction. Smaller-market teams unable to take heavy financial costs, are often forced to rebuild or sell star players rather than compete.

Nowhere is that imbalance more visible than in the Dodgers' projected 2026 starting lineup. With 4 time MVP winner Shohei Ohtani fully healthy and expected to return to pitching, Mookie Betts also an MVP winner, and Freddie Freeman also an MVP. Not only that they also have stars like Will Smith, Max Muncy and Teoscar Hernandez who have all competed in the All Star Game. The Dodgers already resemble an All-Star team rather than an MLB roster.

What pushed frustration among fans to another level, however, was the acquisition of Kyle Tucker. The former Astros and Cubs star, one of the most complete hitters in baseball last year. His arrival only deepened the perception that Los Angeles is collecting talent with little resistance: In a league where many teams struggle to retain even one superstar, the Dodgers now feature multiple MVP-caliber players in the same lineup.

To Dodgers supporters, this is simply a reward for strong management and aggressive ownership. But to much of the league, it represents a flaw in the system. As the Dodgers continue to stack stars and rewrite payroll records, the debate surrounding the competitive balance only grows louder.

Sanah's Sentiments



Starting a new job has come with plenty of surprises, some more predictable than others. There's the challenge of adjusting to an in-person routine, the steep learning curve, and the reality that staying organized is the only way to fit everything into a week. But one adjustment I didn't expect to matter as much is how quickly sports can create a bond in the workplace.

Over the last two months, I've watched teammates connect through conversations about different games and shared experiences, like the traffic getting into a stadium, a heartbreaking loss, or the hope that a new coach might finally bring a team back to life. It's the kind of small talk that turns into real connection.

As the new year kicks off, not all my goals for 2026 are strictly professional. This year, I'm hoping to follow football more closely, understand what the game is really about, catch on to the inside jokes, and maybe even pick a team to root for. Because honestly, sports aren't just entertainment, they're one of the easiest ways to feel connected, find your people, and build a little community wherever you are!

SAVE THE DATE!! July 13, 2026 TPC Potomac!! TPGF Golf # 14!

Auction Items, Mulligans, Prizes for Putting, Closest to the Pin, Long Drive and a Special Hole in One Contest!

If you'd like to register/sign up now please reach out to Del.Wilber@perfectgamefound.org



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