

# 5 TO WATCH: CANADA'S SPORTS BUSINESS AWARDS

Wednesday, June 12, 2019 B6

Advertising produced by the Globe Content Studio. The Globe's editorial department was not involved.

## WOMEN PLAY TO WIN

In the business of sport, female professionals are making great strides and inspiring one another

**WOMEN'S SPORTS AREN'T JUST GETTING** more play, women are also making moves behind the scenes in the business of sport. But there's still room to grow.

Jacquie Ryan was recognized as the top female on The Hockey News' annual Top 100 People of Power and Influence list this year (there were seven women in total).

"I'm proud to be on that list," says the vice-president of social enterprise and sustainable business with Scotiabank. "There's room for more, but we're on an incredible trajectory."

One of the biggest challenges, however, is getting a seat at the table, according to Ryan, a 5 to Watch Alumni Award Winner from 2016 and honorary co-chair of this year's selection committee.

"It sounds simple, but there are times when, for whatever reason, we haven't put our hand up or haven't been invited," Ryan says, "so there's a big role there to make sure we support each other and confidently ask for that seat at that table — and when you're at the table you've got to add value."

That's why it's notable that three of this year's 5 to Watch award winners are women: Megan Chayka with Stathletes Inc., Sarah-Eve Pelletier with the Canadian Olympic Committee and Nicole Lee with the NHL.

At Scotiabank, Ryan brings a business lens to its sponsorship portfolio. "It drives significant value for Scotiabank to the extent where it's one of the biggest drivers of brand equity for us," Ryan says. But sponsorship also gives back: it's helped more than 1 million kids play hockey in Canada.

Giving back seems to come naturally to Ryan; she also mentors

up-and-coming professionals, both men and women. And she has played a supporting role with the new Toronto chapter of WISE (Women In Sports and Events).

Sophie Kotsopoulos, senior director of integrated marketing at the NHL and a 5 to Watch award winner from 2016, sits on the board of WISE Toronto. At the NHL, she builds global marketing campaigns that drive business results for partners; at WISE, she brings women together to provide networking, mentorship and peer support for the next generation of professionals.

"When I started in this field over 11 years ago there weren't as many shining examples as there truly are now," she says.

Even in the past decade, strides have been made to move women from mid-management roles to the VP level and the C-suite. Continued focus will help realize further strides for the future.

When Kotsopoulos was starting out in her career, she attended a 5 to Watch awards ceremony and was inspired by the women she saw up on the stage. Her career came full circle in 2016, when she became one of those inspiring women.

"We talk a lot about how [the awards] are celebrating individuals for their accomplishment, but the real spirit is to inspire the next generation of leaders," Kotsopoulos says.

"It shows that evolution, of aspiration and seeing it and believing it."

The proof is in the pudding: "The first graduating class from the program, back in 1992, was 36 per cent women," says Kathy Dumanski, chair of the school of marketing with George Brown College.

"The current graduating class is 54 per cent women."



Jacquie Ryan, vice-president of social enterprise and sustainable business with Scotiabank, is a 5 to Watch Alumni Award Winner from 2016. GLENN LOWSON FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

## BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS IN SPORT

Brian McLean hasn't let any obstacles stop him from helping others participate in sport



Brian McLean, a graduate of George Brown's Sport and Event Marketing program, is this year's 5 to Watch Alumni Award Winner.

**BRIAN MCLEAN HAS ALWAYS BEEN A SPORTS ENTHUSIAST** — competing in marathons and triathlons, playing hockey, kayaking and rock climbing. He loves the thrill of competition and being part of a team, which has driven both his personal and career paths.

But those paths haven't exactly been easy. McLean is both visually and hearing impaired, so going out for a run, or playing 'blind' hockey, takes more effort — and support — than it would for an able-bodied person.

"I'm legally blind and wear two hearing aids," he says. "I have no

peripheral vision, so when I run I cannot see where my feet land."

That hasn't stopped him from running, nor did it stop him from pursuing a career in the business of sport. Graduating in 1993 from George Brown College's Sport and Event Marketing program, McLean is this year's 5 to Watch Alumni Award Winner for his efforts in helping people participate in sport, no matter what obstacles they face.

After graduation, McLean found a niche working with non-profits. It started when a classmate told him about Achilles International, a non-profit organization that helps people with a physical or psychological disability stay healthy through running. "I got excited and called Achilles International and asked them if I could lead the Canadian chapter," he says.

The rest is history: McLean is now

the volunteer president of Achilles Canada. But he recognized the need to raise funds for gear, training, coaching and running guides. Using the skills he learned in the George Brown School of Marketing program, he established the Annual Achilles St. Patrick's Day Race in Toronto. He also created a third-party fundraising tool so other charitable organizations could collaborate with Achilles Canada. The annual event just celebrated its 20th year, raising more than \$2-million over two decades. In the process, he's helped more than 700 disabled athletes achieve their fitness goals — whether to get in shape or run a marathon.

McLean is also the program lead for partnerships, recreation and sports at the CNIB Foundation, where he empowers Canadians who are blind or living with vision loss to pursue a healthy lifestyle through

recreation and sport.

And, of course, he continues to run, using a rope tethered between himself and his guide runner, who informs him when to turn or how to avoid an obstacle. In fact, it's how he met his wife, Trish.

During a run, McLean took a tumble after Trish, his guide runner, miscalculated which way to turn to avoid a pylon. She was horrified, but he brushed himself off, smiled and kept going — right to the altar. The two have been married for 12 years and have a 10-year-old son.

McLean believes any barrier can be overcome with support and encouragement. "The biggest benefit I got out of the program is the connections that you make within your class, within the industry," he says, "and ultimately [the George Brown] alumni who have helped me to grow and become the person I am today."

George Brown College Foundation believes in encouraging the potential of our students and future graduates through the 5 to Watch Awards. Donations made to the Foundation help fund scholarships and bursaries for students enrolled in business, and sports and event marketing programs. Help us pave the way for the next generation of leaders, visit [georgebrown.ca/giving](http://georgebrown.ca/giving).



## MAKING THE CALL: POSTGRAD PROGRAM OR MASTER'S DEGREE

Postgrad programs are not only less expensive, they prepare students for meaningful employment



Brittany Almeida opted for a graduate certificate over a master's because she wanted to 'bridge the gap' between her undergrad and an employment network.

**BRITTANY ALMEIDA HAD ALWAYS** dreamed of going to Queen's University. She grew up in Kingston, inheriting her Portuguese parents' love of soccer. After five years of living that dream and playing on the women's soccer team, she discovered a new passion: the business of sport.

After graduation, Almeida secured a full-time internship in Queen's athletic department, but "from there I knew that I had to further specialize to meet the minimum requirements of many job opportunities and get up to speed with industry standards for sport marketing roles."

Thanks to the word-of-mouth endorsement from a fellow Queen's graduate — and a colour-coded

binder she created to do a cost/benefit analysis of various programs — she took a leap of faith, moved to Toronto, and opted for a graduate certificate program over a master's degree.

"Ultimately I wanted to bridge the gap between my undergrad and an employment network," Almeida says.

"In terms of cost/benefit, [a postgrad] seemed like the most financially sound and time-effective way to do so. It's so much more accessible; it's not as intimidating and daunting as some of those master's."

The cost of a postgrad certificate in Sport and Event Marketing at George Brown College, for example, is \$4,287 for 12 months, compared with MBA programs, which in the Toronto area cost from \$22,000 to more than \$100,000.

It also positions students to hit the ground running with work-integrated learning through internships, externships, co-ops, practicums, field

placements, in-class projects with real clients and guest speakers from the industry.

For Emily Alexander, who will graduate in August, the postgrad program translated into a work-integrated learning opportunity at Trevor/Peter, where she experienced the full breadth of a creative advertising agency.

"I say this to everyone: It was the best decision I could have made," Alexander says of her postgrad experience so far. "The professors are all working professionals, they're your biggest cheerleaders and ... it was awesome taking courses that were relevant to the working world."

Almeida, who will also complete the program this August, got a four-month internship at TSN, a division of Bell Media, where she worked on broadcast promotions and brand partnerships.

"So truly you get a deeper dive into the sports industry," she says.

"The key word is 'integrated'."

says Ian Austin, dean of the Centre for Business at George Brown College. Work-integrated learning "is about applying one's academic learning and knowledge in the workplace and in a sense 'making it real.'"

A university master's degree is essentially a continuation of an academic and theoretical program of study and is not necessarily connected to the workplace or linked to an employer.

"Interestingly, we're getting more students with advanced degrees and even some mid-career professionals who are coming to George Brown to get a new credential such as a graduate certificate with work experience in their new field of study," Austin says.

At George Brown, 98 per cent of career-focused programs include at least one experiential learning opportunity. Six months after graduation, 83 per cent of graduates are employed and 73 per cent are employed in a related field.



# CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS

The 5 to Watch Awards are presented to five Canadian sports business professionals under the age of 40 who have achieved remarkable career success in the sports business industry.



**MEGHAN CHAYKA**

Stathletes



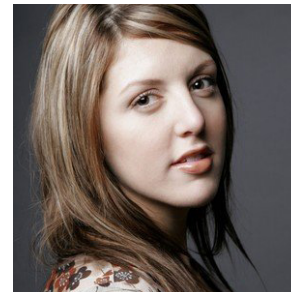
**GALEN DAVIES**

Global Partnerships  
MLSE



**NICOLE LEE**

NHL



**SARAH-EVE PELLETIER**

Canadian Olympic  
Committee



**OWEN WELSH**

Canadian Football  
League



2019 George Brown Alumni  
Achievement Award

**BRIAN MCLEAN**

Achilles Canada

## 5 to Watch 2019

Networking Reception • Awards Ceremony • After Party

Limited tickets available at [5toWatch.ca](http://5toWatch.ca)

Wednesday, June 26, 2019

George Brown College's Waterfront Campus

All proceeds benefit student bursaries for the George Brown College  
Centre for Business.



Awards show hosted by TSN's

**LINDSAY HAMILTON**

PRESENTED BY



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



THANK YOU TO OUR PREMIER PARTNERS

