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Ruther '14 Interning with Chicago Bears

Sept. 26, 2013

Pete Ruther

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— It's game day at Soldier Field, and 70,000 fans are screaming for the Chicago Bears to take the field. Illinois Wesleyan University senior and Bears intern Pete Ruther has been at the stadium since 6 a.m., but when he and the other flag-bearing interns lead the team onto the field, it's all worth the sore feet and aching arms.

Ruther has worked as an Events and Entertainment intern for the Bears since June. His older brother had interned with the organization three years ago, so Ruther was aware of the opportunity when he began considering his options for a summer job.

"I thought I would just apply to see what happens, and they called," said Ruther. "Interviewing at Soldier Field is as cool as you might imagine."

Throughout the summer, he continued to pinch himself to believe he was standing next to quarterback Jay Cutler or tight end Martellus Bennett as Ruther worked at Bears Day at Arlington Park or checked credentials in the VIP area at training camp. Interns help to ensure the 100,000 fans that attend training camp events have a great experience.

At the end of camp, Ruther was one of the interns selected to continue with the organization. Ruther's early-morning tasks on game day include setting the spots for sponsors of the Ultimate Tailgate. During games he and other interns run 8-foot-tall flags whenever the Bears score. He's so close to the action on the field he can hear the helmets pop during hits and sometimes even overhears the players "trash talk" each other.

An internship with an NFL team may seem a bit odd for a history major at a liberal arts school, but Ruther said he's a history major who hopes to go into sports marketing. "I'm very appreciative of what I've learned here," he said of his time at Illinois Wesleyan. "I know how to read critically, I know how to write, and I know how to do research. Those are skills that will be useful no matter what I do."

And his dream job? You have to look a little further east of Chicago – to Detroit. Working in marketing for the Detroit Lions would be the ultimate experience, he said. "My whole family is from Michigan," said Ruther, who grew up in Channahon, Ill. "We were the Bears aliens in our subdivision."

Ruther said he gave full disclosure about his allegiance to the division rivals during his interview process with the Bears. He recalled the organization was far more interested in his enthusiasm and "whatever it takes" attitude than if he bled burnt orange and navy blue.

"It just kind of became a big joke (his love for the Lions)," Ruther said of the interview questions. In fact, he said the staff members' ability to have fun while taking their jobs very seriously has been the best part of his internship with the Bears.



Ruther said the experience is a bit surreal at times. “It was a very special feeling when the FedEx shipping box showed up with my credentials and my parking pass,” he said. “When I get to Soldier Field on game day, I show my pass and they let me just walk in. I’m going to keep these credentials forever.”

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