

After 20 years in gymnastics, ASU Law grad finds new purpose in sports industry

By Kourtney Kelley, ASU News
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Editor's note: This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [fall 2025 graduates](#).

For Peyton Valdez, sports have never just been competitions — they've been community, identity and home. After spending 20 years as a gymnast, she found herself searching for a new way to stay connected to the world that shaped her. What she discovered was a passion not only for athletics, but for the power of sports events to move people, create memories and bring communities together.

That realization eventually led Valdez from Houston to Phoenix, to attend the [Allan "Bud" Selig Sports Law and Business](#) program at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University, where she will graduate with a Master of Sports Law and Business. The program, she says, opened doors she didn't even know existed and helped her transform her lifelong love of sport into a future career built on service, strategy and impact.

As she prepares to join Mass Media Marketing as a client service intern after graduation, Valdez reflects on the journey that brought her here and the lessons that will carry her forward.

Note: Answers may have been lightly edited for length and/or clarity.

Question: What was your “aha” moment, when you realized you wanted to study the field you majored in?

Answer: I spent the first 20 years of my life doing gymnastics. After retiring, I looked for ways to stay connected to the sport. I attended every home meet during undergrad, as well as traveled to the SEC Championships and National Championships. I experienced gymnastics from an entirely new perspective and became captivated by the power of sports and events to shape people's lives and create lasting memories. From that time onward, I knew I wanted to contribute to sports and events that would allow people to experience special moments and build sustaining memories.

Q: What's something you learned while at ASU — in the classroom or otherwise — that surprised you or changed your perspective?

A: I learned the value of balancing soft skills and hard skills, and when to let each one have its moment. Before ASU, I nearly exclusively focused on building technical skills, but I have since realized that efficient communication, meaningful networking and highlighting interpersonal abilities are sometimes just as critical.

Q: Why did you choose ASU?

A: I was 14 years old when I first decided I wanted to go to ASU. I was drawn to ASU by the school spirit, immersive campus life and strong sense of community, and that's held true for me since that age. Beyond that, the Master of Sports Law and Business program is one of one. I am so proud to finally be able to call myself a Sun Devil.

Q: Which professor taught you the most important lesson while at ASU?

A: Professor Ray Anderson taught me the most important lessons: "Bet on yourself, it's a good bet." He encourages students to believe in themselves, invest in their professional and personal growth, and face adversity head on.

Q: What's the best piece of advice you'd give to those still in school?

A: Take every opportunity that comes your way, and if there's not one, make one. You never know the experiences you might have, people you may meet or doors that can open simply by putting yourself out there.

Q: How has this degree helped you in your professional journey?

A: This degree changed my professional trajectory for the absolute better. I entered the program with less professional experience than I would have liked, and I am graduating from the program with more skills, connections and experiences than I ever could have imagined. I feel confident in my abilities and prepared to take on whatever comes next in my career.

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Text image(s)



Peyton Valdez