

BREAKING NEWS

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THIS FOUNDER IS PUTTING THE POWER OF THE PERSONAL BRAND INTO THE HANDS OF COLLEGIATE ATHLETES

MOGL CEO and Co-Founder, Ayden Syal, is profiled by the Idea Center at his Alma Mater, the University of Notre Dame, and discusses the development of MOGL.

In the first two months of MOGL, it was just Syal. Realizing he couldn't do it all himself, he reached out to Notre Dame connections. One of them was Joe Schmidt, a linebacker at Notre Dame from 2011-2012. He suggested that Syal talk to his former Mendoza College of Business classmate, Wimbush. In January 2020, the former college quarterback joined MOGL as chief athletic officer.

The timing was perfect. That same month the NCAA began voicing support—formal approval wouldn't come for another 18 months—for student athletes using their name, image and likeness for financial gain. Syal and Wimbush started working on the platform.

For the next year-and-a-half, the two entrepreneurs poured their hearts and what little spare time they had—both had full-time day jobs—into MOGL. A great deal of time was spent validating the hypotheses of what collegiate athletes wanted and needed to connect with personal brand opportunities.

“We did a lot of focus groups with collegiate athletes, professional athletes, and businesses to determine pain points, our value proposition, and how open they'd be to what we were proposing. And it's important to point out, we weren't just talking to athletes in the big revenue generating sports of football, basketball and baseball. We talked to soccer players, gymnasts, track and field, men and women,” Syal explains.

Their research identified four major pain points for student athletes if given the opportunity to benefit financially from their name, image and likeness. First, student athletes said they had no time to source deals for themselves, and hiring an agent wasn't a viable option for most. Second, they had no safe and secure way to get paid. Third, having to report to a university compliance officer would be a hassle. Finally, the complexities of managing one's name, image, and likeness are daunting.

The frustration felt by student athletes had an impact on Syal. “The NCAA has historically been against student athletes being compensated for their brand . But the fact that you have nine-year-old TikTokers making millions and student athletes can't monetize their brands seems criminal. I mean, why can a student musician have a band and be compensated and a collegiate athlete can't be compensated for a training camp?”

He continues, “The old argument is student athletes get a full-ride scholarship, and that's enough. But many don't have enough money for food or simple entertainment. Most student athletes don't go pro so the only time they can monetize their brand is during their college playing years.”

The motivation to build out the MOGL platform to empower athletes and the local community in the name, image, and likeness era was high for Syal and Wimbush. To test the platform, they hosted an autograph session with Wimbush in partnership with Downtown South Bend in Indiana in October 2020 three years after he'd last played for Notre Dame. Between 400 and 500 people showed up, affirming the star appeal of student athletes.

There's one last aspect near and dear to Syal and Wimbush: MOGL has committed to donating a portion of their revenue to local youth athletic programming in underserved areas through a partnership with a national nonprofit called Every Kid Sports to ensure all kids can play sports and reap the lifelong rewards.

"Today, youth sports are 'pay to play' with registration fees, equipment fees and travel fees. That's cut out low-income kids. We want all youth athletes to have the opportunity to play, participate and have fun," Syal says.

With the MOGL platform up and running and the stars now aligned in their favor, Syal says he and the team have stared down a number of challenges. The biggest one was simply starting the company. "I had a full-time job while working on MOGL. It took an incredible number of hours to pull this off in terms of creating the platform, building a team and ultimately launching. But we stayed stubbornly focused and did everything in our power to build the company."

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