

The logo for 'LIFE at Disney' is centered within a dark, rounded rectangular box. The word 'LIFE' is in a clean, white, sans-serif font. 'at' is in a smaller, lowercase, white, sans-serif font. 'Disney' is in the iconic white script font. The background of the entire image is a colorful, pixelated pattern transitioning from yellow and green on the left to red and purple on the right.

LIFE at Disney

Episode 7 Transcript: ESPN – Social Media and Production

Ashley and Tony (Podcasts Hosts)

Welcome to the Disney podcast, the show where you discover what it's like to be part of the story and a career with Disney as we bring the Walt Disney Company's core values, culture, and work to life. We're your host, Tony Williams and Ashley Siegel, and we are going to share some remarkable stories from the perspectives of the people and the teams behind the magic.

Ashley

This week's episode is all about ESPN and we are so excited to have a member of ESPN's social media content team with us today. This team is working around the clock to discover, develop, and distribute content that engages ESPN fans across Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, and more. So welcome to the show, Jett Watkins.

Jett

Thank you. Thank you. Super excited to be here. I've been thinking about it forever, so I'm super excited to get into this and give you guys all the information on what I do.

Ashley

Yeah, you have such a cool job and I'm so excited that we have you here and that we can talk a little about what you're doing and what your team is doing at ESPN and really give people just a little bit of a peek in. And so, you know, what I like to do is I always like to start with. How did you get here? Right. What is your Disney story? So, can you tell us a little bit about kind of your road, your journey to get to where you are today in your role?

Jett

Yeah, absolutely. So, I went to CCSU, which is Central Connecticut State University for Sports Journalism. Eventually, you know, throughout my years there, I started veering a little more towards social media. I thought it was a little more fun. You got to be a little more creative. So, I actually started doing and running the social media at my local recreation center. So, I did that for around three or four years. And all of this was to prepare me to eventually make that leap into, you know, the big leagues, which is the ESPN, the Bleacher Reports, the, you know, all the different types of sports media companies that are around. And obviously being in Connecticut, you know, you drive by

ESPN every single time for every student who aspires to work in sports. You know, having ESPN right there, especially if you're Connecticut based, is definitely a big draw. So, I just noticed that there was you know, there was always waiting for a social media specialist one position to open up. You know, I would check back, you know, daily checking to see, you know, are there any jobs open or any jobs open? Finally, I got lucky enough to find that job application and sent it in and kind of just got started from there.

Ashley

That's so cool. You know, it's super similar to the start of my career. I went to the University of Massachusetts Amherst, so shout out to our Northeast schools.

Jett

Let's go.

Ashley

Because I used the same thing drive past that campus every time I was driving up from New York. And so, to see ESPN and for me to eventually end up at Disney and get to have a conversation with you, how serendipitous. I love it. So right now, you are in a social media specialist two role. And so, what did it look like coming into the company? And then what does it look like in your role now?

Jett

So, coming in as a social media specialist one, you know, you're really just trying to learn how we go about our day to day. You know, what type of content do we post, you know, for which platform is the best content made for? And really, that was just me learning the ropes, getting used to, you know, content curation, cutting, editing video, you know, graphic design and really just you know, getting me into the swing of things. Obviously, my role was still to create engaging content, which is similar to my role now. It's just that now I have a little more responsibility in the fact that I'm leading more things. You know, I'm leading the ideation process, I'm leading the actual live window process. So, it's just a little more responsibility as a social media specialist two.

Ashley

That's such exciting work. So, you're really looking at that full lifecycle. So, what is your day to day look like when your kind of coming into, now I assume a virtual office, but hopefully at some point and an in real life office, because the Bristol campus is really awesome

Jett

Yes. So funny enough, I am finally able to actually go into the Bristol office. It was everything I could have ever imagined you know; I had always looked up on Google Images, you know, ESPN campus. I wanted to see what the cafe looked like, you know, things like that. And now to finally be on campus and be able to make use of those

amenities and, you know, be right next to my coworkers, it's, you know, it's really indescribable. It's really the best feeling in the world. But, you know, in terms of my day to day the first thing I do in the morning is I just look at my phone and I just see, you know, what are people talking about? You know, did something happen last night? Was there a big dunk? Did LeBron say something interesting or did one of our ESPN talent, you know, say something to set an athlete off? You know, all these different things we look at. And I usually what I do is I screenshot them. So, I just remember them for the morning and it's just a way to, you know, keep my ideas in one place. So, the first thing I'll do is I'll just whip out my phone and then I'll head into Photoshop. And whether that's, you know, creating a graphic template regarding a photo or looking at, you know, some of the best highlights from last night and creating it to, you know, a little carousel on Instagram in terms of, you know, a dunk, a cool assist, whatever Luka's doing, whatever Kevin Durant said, things like that. And that's really the same across, you know, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook. There is obviously little differences here and there, but it's really just first thing is just what content is out there and how can I put it into the form that will best suit our fans.

Ashley

That's super cool to kind of here how that's being populated and across all of our different social platforms. And I assume that that's constantly changing to the way fans are engaging, the way athletes are engaging and seeing them engaging back is always really exciting. So that's super cool. What's been a highlight for you so far? Favorite story, favorite project, favorite something that really just stands out?

Jett

Absolutely. I would say I got the opportunity to lead on, I'm a huge college football fan, so getting the opportunity to lead on the Heisman Ceremony is definitely probably one of my bigger highlights. And again, that was just having brainstorming, organizing them, getting everybody's ideas and really consolidating that into an actual plan that we can use moving forward onto the social platforms that we have. In addition to that, probably the best moments, you know, those giddy moments where really like, wow, I work at ESPN and like what I'm putting out, you know, millions are seeing it whenever I post something and an athlete, you know, comments on it, or puts it on their story. That's always such a crazy feeling to see like someone of know that renowned seeing your content, content that you made, that you thought of and using it as their own. It's always just a great feeling.

Ashley

Yeah, you should be so proud when that happens. That is so cool. I know my team. We do a lot of work with our historically black colleges and universities. So, Disney on the Yard and when we've had events and Drum Major Mickey has come and we've seen different athletes or musicians or any sort of celebrities taking that and reposting Drum Major Mickey, we're like, oh my gosh, we're doing something so cool that's really impacting culture at large. That's just so cool to hear about. It must be awesome. Every time it happens.

Jett

Oh, absolutely. And I 100% screenshot it every time so I can show my friends, hey, LeBron commented on one of my posts or hey, look what Steven A commented on one of mine. It's definitely a great feeling.

Ashley

That's cool thing about working in sports, right? Like that stuff, no matter how far you get into your career, just feels like that stuff never gets old. Like that is just it's why we keep doing what we do. It's why we love we do.

Jett

100%.

Ashley

Was ESPN always where you wanted to be and you talked about in school, you were looking at the different sports companies. But was this like you're this was the childhood dream?

Jett

Oh, yes. Yes. I grew up watching SportsCenter, like, and I'm not talking about like just once. I would watch it would be on from like 12 to 1, then 1 to 2 and 2 to 3. I watched every single one of them. I don't care if it was new news, old news. I loved watching sports, and I loved watching Stewart Scott and all of the stuff that they would do. My gosh, that is what I grew up on. So, ESPN was always the dream. You know, all along the way, you have to like to consider you know, different options. But ESPN was always the goal, you know, what little six-year-old Jett imagined in his mind was me working at ESPN and creating content, whether it was journalism or social media. I have always wanted to work at ESPN.

Ashley

I love that. And now you're getting to be there and you're getting to be there in person. And you're just talking about the campus. And I mean, it really is. It's like Disney World's for sports.

Jett

Oh, my gosh, it is.

Ashley

The halls are decorated, every room is themed, and it's so hard to convey that to someone like how special it is to walk down those halls.

Jett

It's amazing. My first time. You know, it's going to be something I remember forever. You know, it's larger than life. It's sports, but it's like it's a sports wonderland. And everyone there you know, is like a hard worker is a crazy fan for sports. It's just it's a great environment to be in. And I couldn't wish for anything more.

Ashley

Okay. So as our listeners know, ESPN is part of the larger Walt Disney Company. And one of the beautiful things about working for Disney is that we get the opportunity to learn about different teams, businesses, brands, all across the enterprise and get to do things like this, have conversations with people who have totally different jobs than we do. And I think the one thing that always stays constant is that everyone that you're meeting is a storyteller in some sense, whether it's a sports story or an entertainment story, the stories in our movies and certainly those that are being told that are parks, everybody really gets to tell a story in a new and different way. And that's really what makes this company so beloved. It's why we stay right that we can hear these new stories from one another. And so, what for you has been kind of that that aha moment of not only am I working at ESPN, but I'm working at Disney, working among all of these amazing storytellers. How does that show up for you when you're in your first year here?

Jett

Yeah, I mean, I think you hit the nail on the head. I think the biggest thing when it comes to us is our inclusivity. If you have a story, you know, we're willing to tell it, especially, you know, if it's a sports story or a sports adjacent story, you know, being able to work on so many events that, you know, cover so many a diverse range of people has been incredible. And I think that's where Disney, you know, as a company really shines. It doesn't matter where you come from, we are willing to tell your story, and we're going to do it to the best of our ability.

Ashley

I think some of my favorite things about a lot of the ESPN stories is that we're hearing both the stories on the court and we're hearing the stories off the court. Right. We're following what's happening in the leagues. And we're also following what's happening behind closed doors and locker rooms. And off the court, off the field. So, I think that's always such a great part and it's so cool to see how social media plays such a huge role in telling that really full story of these athletes and leadership and all of that.

Jett

Oh, 100%. And I think a lot of people forget that, you know, these athletes may be grander than life. You know, you might, you know, watch their Instagram stories, or follow them on Twitter. And they just seem so far and so distant. But these are people they're real people. Who go through the challenges that we go through. And I think a lot of fans sometimes

forget that. And with mental health becoming, you know, such a bigger emphasis today, I think it's important that we as a company and the reach that ESPN has tell the stories of not just the athlete, but the person. And I think that's where we really excel at Disney.

Ashley

I agree. I agree. I love getting to see kind of that peek behind. Right. What is their true story? What is the full story? Not just what they're bringing in a game. So, I think that's so amazing. How is that shown up in your work? Has there been a story that you've been able to tell that really is that person's story? More than what's happening in the game?

Jett

Yeah, absolutely. There was a time, you know, way back when I started, I got the opportunity to work on a marketing project that was geared towards, there's no place like sports. And it was revolved around Leylah Fernandez and Emma Raducanu, both, you know, really, really young girls who had beaten these titans of their sport in tennis and hadn't, you know, really, really struggled their way to and into the finals. And I got to cover that and cover their story. And it was really just an awesome opportunity to peek behind you know, who they were as athletes and really look into like how they got to where they are, because these people just aren't, you know, amazing athletes out of nowhere. They have to work; they have to grind. You know, they have to compete for a very, very long time before they get the opportunity to really, you know, go on to that grand stage. And for a 19-year-old and 18-year-old to just, you know, really take over an event like that was amazing to watch.

Ashley

That's awesome. That's so cool that ya'll got to tell their really like 360 story, right? Not just on the court story. It's always amazing to me when athletes take the opportunity to use the platforms that they have for good, for the greater good. Right. And so being able to use the power of ESPN, the power of Disney to tell those stories on such a grand stage is just amazing. It's one of my favorite things about being part of this company is that we really get to enact change when we're using our platforms for good like that. So that's so cool to hear. All right. Switching gears, a little bit, thinking about the great experience that you're having at ESPN and at Disney, is there any advice that you would give to other people who are listening or watching us right now and saying, oh, gosh, I would love to be producing social for ESPN? Like, what's some of that advice you'd want to offer?

Jett

Yeah, absolutely. And honestly, it's so crazy because I remember when I was applying for ESPN jobs, I was looking for something or where someone who worked at ESPN would talk a little bit about like how they got there or, you know, what steps they took to be able to reach that role. And here I am finally able to give that advice. So absolutely, I think probably the most important thing, if you're wanting to get into social media or you're wanting to get into graphic design or sports social is you just have to get the reps in. You

know, just I don't know whether it's your own account or a fan account. I would recommend creating something on a social platform where you can showcase your talent, whether that's graphic design or you're breaking news. Obviously not as fast as some of the big corporations do it, but showing that you know how to find content and which social platform to bring it to. There was something that was told to me, you know, right when I started, where it really resonated with me in that this is a get to job. This isn't you know; this isn't a have to job. I get to break news. I get to talk about Tom Brady retiring and then on retiring, I get to...

Ashley

Ah!

Jett

I know!

Ashley

You had to bring him up.

Jett

I had to me had to slip them into the conversation there, that was that was quite the day.

Ashley

Listen, that's what ESPN pays you for. Don't. I have this theory as a Jets fan, you all make me hear his name all the time.

Jett

Oh, my gosh. Watching all those sport accounts react to that. It was it was a crazy day. I don't want to relive it, but it was it's definitely going to live in infamy. But yeah, as I was saying, like to be able to, you know, get to this point where you're creating content for something as big as ESPN. We need to see that you've been able to do it on a smaller level before. So, you know, work on your Photoshop, work on your Adobe Premiere Pro, you know, make sure that the skills are there so that when it comes time for those interviews, you can come to the interview and say, here's what I can create. Here's what I've done. Let me do it for you.

Ashley

Absolutely. I love it. It's such good advice and it's so cool when you get to that point and you're able to offer that advice, right? Like that give back that, I always say that sending the elevator back down making sure that your kind of clearing that way for other folks to come up and tell their own stories and tell these stories that are that really are there. So, they're at the forefront of everything that's happening in our culture right now and showing how you've been able to do that, the value that you would add, what's special and unique about

you? That's the key and if everybody could just harness that bit of magic to use a Disney term that's unique to you. Right. And bring that in show why that's so important. I think that's some of the best advice that you can offer. So, I love, love, love to hear it. And I'm excited to see who comes next and follows in your footsteps.

Jett

You know, I didn't work at a prior NBA team. I didn't work at like a prior NFL team or some big corporation. I was doing social media for a recreation facility. You know, I was posting about, you know, gym equipment and fitness classes and intramurals and club sports. But the point is I had a huge amount of content to showcase where I created it. You know, I posted it, it got great impressions, it got great shares. It doesn't matter what, you know, what role you've taken in terms of social if you've shown that you can do it at a high level, you know, ESPN will consider you.

Ashley

I love that. Obviously, you've landed where you really dreamt to start so what's next? Where would you want to be in, you know, five, ten years?

Jett

I think if you get to this point that I'm at now, you know, you're not satiated you know, you're still hungry, you're still grinding, you're looking for what's next. And I think for me, I obviously I love this company. I want to be here forever. You know, this has been my dream and my goal is just keep on rising. Next job for me would be a senior social media specialist. That's where I'm headed to. That's what I want. And it really again, it's about the reps. You know now that I'm SSII, a social media specialist two, I'm able to lead on more things. So, getting more experience, you know, leading on huge events, getting to go on site, you know, be on the courts, you know, filming, getting on site content, these are all things that I may not have as much experience right now, but I 100% plan on getting and continue to keep on growing.

Ashley

It's awesome, you know, it's been so great to learn from you today. Thank you so much for joining us, for joining me and sharing your experiences. It's been so much fun to learn about your role, about all of the things that you're working on. I know I'm going to be following all of your socials with a much closer eye now that I know who's behind them. So, thank you again so much for being here and good luck with everything. I think you have a super bright career ahead.

Jett

Thank you so much. It was a pleasure talking to you and feel free to have me back whenever I love talking ESPN and Disney. So, I'm all for it.

Tony

It was so great to hear your story Jett and how your dream of making it to ESPN came true. I know you're going to have an amazing career here, and if you're looking to land your dream job with ESPN, you may want to check out ESPN Next, a leadership development program based in content production. To talk more about this program and her current role with ESPN, let's welcome to the show, Sania Blue. Sania, thank you for joining us today.

Sania

Thank you so much for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Tony

So am I. This is such a timely conversation. I was at the inaugural Black Sports Business Symposium put on by ESPN in Atlanta. And there I had an opportunity to get a bit of an intro to the ESPN Next program and all the amazing work and opportunity that's happening there. So now to get to do a bit of a deep dive with you is really a treat.

Sania

I love that. I love that so many great things have happened to me through Next, but also just like seeing all the black excellence that was at the Black Symposium. I loved it. It was it was all smiles.

Tony

Absolutely. I could not have said it better myself. And so, speaking of our presence in this industry, you are here, you are in the mix. You were doing all the things I want to hear about how you got there. And so, as I understand that you started your journey as an intern, is that right?

Sania

Correct. That is right. I started with ESPN Daily Podcast, so I claim them as like my OG ESPN family, and they're amazing.

Tony

Awesome. What was that experience like?

Sania

It was really interesting because we were the first, myself and another intern at the time who's now going to be full time, Andre Soto. We were the first podcast interns, but we were also doing it during the pandemic, and we were remote. So I was in Chicago, Andre's was in L.A., the rest of the team was kind of sporadically throughout the country, and we were all working from like our home set up. But it was incredible to see the amount of work and attention to detail in terms of creating the stories like and having really, really

strong storylines. Pablo Torre being the host he was amazing. Being able to just get in his wife's closet. That's where he records. And there's an ongoing joke of that. But just being able to be in there and really like get to the nitty gritty of our stories because there are podcasts like often, you know, you have a kind of that conversational element, which is great. But what was so special about Daily is that it prioritizes storytelling and making sure that if you close your eyes and just listen to what's happening, you can actually create your own world and imagery through the story that we were part of producing for Daily. And then I got to work on a really special piece about Jalen Rose being the first ever Jalen and talked to like over 30 Jalen' and got to be on the podcast too. So, all in all, it was a ten out of ten experience. I'm really grateful for my time with Daily.

Tony

That's so awesome. And shout out to Chicago, I'm from Chicago, in L.A. now. So really, really interesting that throughout these conversations this line continues of storytelling and that really being our North Star for so much of the work that we do here and so happy to see that that shows up even at the intern level experience right where we're really focused on how we're telling these really important stories. And so really, really great to see that. In that internship you mentioned, right, that was also part of the ESPN Next program.

Sania

Yes, it was. I came in as an ESPN Next intern that eventually then led me to be an ESPN Next full-time employee.

Tony

Awesome. How did you hear about the program and can you for those folks that aren't familiar? Can you kind of give us ESPN Next 101?

Sania

Yeah, sure. So, the way I heard about it, I a little bit of backstory. I went to the University of Missouri. We kind of brag about our school a little bit. And John Anderson is a notable alumni from our school. And so, he made sure that there was complete access between ESPN and journalism students at Mizzou. So, I heard about it through my counselor. But then come to find out, there are other friends of mine who also heard about it from social networks and from other organization groups and things like that. NABJ being one of them, National Association of Black Journalists. And after hearing about it through that, I decided to apply, and I applied in 2020 so my story a little bit different and how it circled back. I applied in 2020, got the internship. But then of course the pandemic happened. So, I was like, all right, now what do I do. I was planning to go to Bristol and right after graduation what was going on. But I reached out to there was a recruiter who actually reached out to me on LinkedIn and ESPN Next and the program and being able to access it or being able to apply for it is very visible on LinkedIn as well. So also for anybody interested in finding it that way, and I kept in contact with the recruiters who are on LinkedIn and then eventually

they circled back around and said, hey, you know, we know you were selected as an intern back when you were graduating, but we want to make sure we keep our promise and we want to make sure we still give you that opportunity. And we see that you've been doing some work, so we would love to have you back with ESPN. And Celia was another person of contact who is also available and accessible on LinkedIn but talk to her as well. And she was amazing. So, then that's how I kind of started. I got my internship and actually did the interview process, things like that. When it came to me, being able to do that full time going to Next, it was me really just kind of like cranking out that work at my internship and making sure everyone knew this was where I wanted to be. These are the departments I wanted to be in talking to literally every single person I could. So, I just made sure that I was very active and showing my initiative to be at this company to bring my own perspective as well. And through that and my collaboration with Next, I was able to come here full time. So that's kind of like how I entered in. And then in terms of the one-on-one sort of thing, or when you start here as a full time, as a full-time employee, you are here as a PA essentially, which is a production assistant. So, production assistants start in a variety of different pods. So, pods look like NFL, studio or event, event being more game oriented, studio being more of our studio shows, so like "Get Up" and "First Take", things like that. You may go to features. I started out in features, then moved over to the NFL pod, which is where I'm at now and I was a features for nine months, then I go for NFL for nine months and then after that you can be promoted to a content associate or CA provided that you know you handle your business. So that's a little bit of the overall ESPN Next like step by step.

Tony

Awesome. And what's the length of the program?

Sania

So, in total it's about 18 months.

Tony

Awesome. So, I think you dropped so many gems, right, that I really want to make sure that we highlight from the conversation. The first was kind of your engagement with the recruiter, right? And I think sometimes we miss in our efforts, right, looking for opportunity, that relationships are also important there. And it is possible to build a bit of a relationship with your recruiter or with the recruiter for an organization or a team and let them know where you want to be and where you're trying to go. And it sounds like you did a great job of that. So much so that the recruiter circled back and said, hey, I know that the pandemic kind of messed some things up, but we see you're still killing it, right? We know you're interested. Would you be interested in continuing the opportunity, so you did that really well. And then once you were inside, you leveraged the resources to network to really make sure that you knew who the key players were in your world and that they knew that

you wanted to be here. And I want to stick a pin there for a second because you made it clear that you wanted to be at ESPN, and you wanted to do this work. Why?

Sania

That's a great question. I made it clear that I wanted to be at ESPN because I always kind of describe myself as an impact centric storyteller and what we do here at this company is unmatched. Like the amount of access that we have to different stories. The fact that my, whenever I think about storytelling too, I think about my 13- and 14-year-old brothers and like how they are ingesting things right now that are going on. I also think about the little girl who may look like me, who doesn't see herself in anything, or who's now being able to do so. And impact is so important to that, to remembering those people. Because I know that at ESPN our impact is so vast and so big. So, to be within the Disney umbrella, a place where I grew up, you know, I'm I am a true heart to heart Disney kid, don't get me started on like *High School Musical* like *Lion King* like all that. And I just wanted to be a part of that Disney family. On top of that, I have met so many incredible people who work at this company who I wanted to learn from and to grow with. And I just saw that working at ESPN, especially right now, being so young in my career, it was the best opportunity for me to go and to develop as not only the producer, but the person and the woman that I see myself to be. So, making it clear and known was the easy part. It was just like, hey, you know, I am here, and my parents are always telling me the value of relationships and the value of letting people know what you want to do. Everybody here who is at ESPN let me know very clear, make sure people know what you want to do. So, all in all, just kind of getting back to the root of your question, it was, I want to be at a place that impacts. I want to be at a place that tells incredible stories. And then I also want to be at a place that will welcome my perspective so that we can tell stories that haven't been told before. That's why it was important for me to be able to work here.

Tony

That is incredible. Don't be surprised if you see impact centric storyteller pop up on my LinkedIn. Like as a little I was going to add it. I'll quote you like I'll give your credit for it.

Sania

Oh, look, I love it. I love it. I'm all for it. Let's share. Let's spread it. We don't need to keep holding on to things just one on one. I'm not a gatekeeper by any means. I love that.

Tony

I can only imagine your little brothers telling their friends that their sister works at ESPN, right? Like the coolest big sister ever

Sania

It is so cute. I go back home, I recently went back home because my brother graduated from eighth grade, and I was meeting some of his friends. My parents trust me, my parents

do not go anywhere without letting somebody know where I work. I'm met one of his one of his friends' families and he was like, yeah, my sister works at ESPN. And they were like, cool. And I was like, yeah, so it's amazing for sure.

Tony

That's awesome. In terms of impact you also mentioned, right, so that little girls that looked like you can see you in these spaces and doing this work and know that it's for them. I think there's another side of that coin, too, where folks that don't look like you right, get used to seeing you in that space so that when that little girl comes, it's a different experience, perhaps a better experience for her, for you having been there. So, I always think that there's both sides of that coin, right? The inspiration and in the kind of preparation of that space for the future.

Sania

For sure.

Tony

Impact centric storyteller, I'm never letting that go. And so, you mentioned that on your journeys being the amazing producer in the space, you're going to be that the first stop as a part of this program was as a production assistant with ESPN Next. Can you tell us what that is and what was your day to day there?

Sania

Yeah, so a production assistant, they are, and I can say this because the president of our company has very well said this, production assistants are the backbone of ESPN, like any, you know, like so all props to my fellow PAs, we know it can be a struggle sometimes with our hours, they are kind of just the craziness of whatever sport we're reporting on or working on but a production assistant essentially is someone who is helping to produce the shows or produce the game. So, a lot of that involves cutting video. So what we would call like a VO, which is a voiceover, it's video where the anchors speak over it, making sure you have your sound or if there's a clip from an interview for or if some player said something and we want to incorporate that in the show or in the game, making sure that maybe like a graphic is right or making sure that there are other just overall creative elements that really enhance the show. You have NFL Live. That's a show that I work on. Love that show. Love that crew. You have NFL Live, and you have our host Laura Rutledge and Marcus Spears are talking about let's say, we're talking about like Deebo Samuel. Right. So while Marcus is talking about Deebo Samuel, you'll see video of Deebo Samuel playing for the 49ers and that's video that I as a production assistant that's something that I would cut and make sure is in the show that's an example of like what our small like little tidbits of the day look like. Another huge role of production assistance is to pitch story ideas that like means so much not only us in our roles but as the overall company. This company thrives on ideas and ideation just creativity. So that's a huge part of our role but what my day to

day looks like it depends on the department I'm in. When I was in features and worked specifically for *Andscape*, at the time it was the *Undefeated* when I was working over there was a little bit more involved. So that meant like me going on shoots, sometimes directing shoots, sometimes prepping interviews, and figuring out what our *Black History Always* specials are going to be. Again, pitching ideas, cutting video, finding video on our archives, but versus what it looks like in the studio space, it's coming in in the morning, listening to our production call at 10am, and figuring out what ideas and storylines we want to run with for the show today. Then going back to cut the video, cut the audio, make sure everything looks good, work with the editor, put it all in so that the show looks magical, and we can walk away from the end of the day or 5:00 like. All right. Great show, guys, or all right, maybe we need to work on this or maybe we need to work on that. So that's a little preview into the what the day-to-day role of a PA might look like.

Tony

Awesome. Awesome. So, I want to shift gears one last time in thinking about this really special place of ESPN in our Disney World. And so, you are brilliant, you are ambitious, you are a well-trained Mizzou journalists. Right. And every day you wake up and choose to be at ESPN, at Disney. Why?

Sania

I think every day I wake up, I choose to be at ESPN and Disney because I am constantly challenged to be a better version of myself, better creative. I am challenged to learn new skills, pick up some other things to put in my toolbox. I'm challenged to explore new stories, explore new sports, to explore new perspectives, to have challenging conversations that may be uncomfortable. But even on the social front, I meet, so, I have so many friends that I've gained from, you know, us working together at the company where now we're having different conversations that are just like, man Sania, you really weren't as open to this as you thought, or you really weren't, as, you know, inclined to understanding this as you thought. So, I'm constantly being challenged, and I do not work well with complacency. So being able to be pushed like that and also knowing that if I wanted to stop working in production today, that I can go network and figure out how to go work on the marketing side or how to go work in talent acquisitions or something like that. Like I could because we have such a big umbrella of things. If I wanted to go figure out how to work in Marvel, I could, you know, so at the end of the day, I'm constantly challenged. I'm constantly my creative wheels are always turning. But also, if I want to walk away from this whole production thing in total, I have that option to do that and stay within the same company. So just that those are kind of like those things that and then too, my dad always says, don't mess it up for us. So, if I leave, I better have a really good next plan.

Tony

I think we've all gotten that advice regarding our good jobs. And we do, to your point, right? We always say that Disney is a great place to recreate your career because of the

number of opportunities that are here, and shameless plug for talent acquisition. We would be happy to have you if you ever want to just come on, jump on over.

Sania

Look, don't tease me, don't tease me.

Tony

And so, we've talked a lot about right part of your impact being inspiration specifically for little girls that looked like you probably for your little brothers and all their friends to. What would you then tell folks maybe not quite that young yet right but for let's say maybe some of our college students or folks that are looking to transition careers that are interested in the ESPN Next program and the journey that you've been on, what advice would you give them?

Sania

I would say no matter what, even if you're in transition or you know that you fully want to come over here to ESPN or you fully want to invest yourself in the sports media, I think it's important to know that your path is your path. It is unique to you. So even if you decide like yeah, I am, you know, 22 and I think that I've started a career somewhere else, but I really want to go.... First of all, you're 22. We are all like very young. We are not supposed to have life figured out and I want to like transition over to ESPN. I know that my path is my path. I'm not going to compare myself to everyone else and I'm just going to network. I'm going to network, I'm going to learn, I'm going to work to figure out how I can bring these not only bring myself into what I'm now doing, but also how do I gain the skill so that I can be smart and efficient and strategic. I think between understanding who you are, what you can learn, and what you bring to the table, as well as reminding yourself that your path is unique specifically to you, nobody else can be Tony. Nobody else can be Sania. Like understanding those things will help you really cultivate a strong identity and strong focus for yourself and your path and your industry. So just talk to people, learn about yourself throughout this process, learn about other people and how their journeys came to be and don't kind of tunnel vision yourself into I have to be perfect. I have to be this; I have to be that. I promise you right now that Jimmy Pitaro would definitely say that he is not a perfect person. And he is the president of ESPN. Like I promise you right now that, like, even myself, oh my gosh, I know I'm not a perfect person and we're still growing and learning and maturing, but that's what the journey is about. So just if it's something that you want to do, if you follow your heart, but know who you are, who you are, what you bring to the table and continue to learn.

Tony

I say, Sania, top to bottom, gem, end to end, I think this is going to be a replay for some folks. Thank you so much for your time. Thank you so much for sharing your journey. Thank you for the excellence that you bring to your work every day and the impact that that has

on so many people. We can see it. We can hear it; we can feel it in how you talk about it. Thank you again for everything that you're doing looking forward to whatever your next production is going to be, even if it's a stent in TA, shameless plug again. But thank you. Thank you, again. And looking forward to chatting again soon.

Sania

Thank you so much, Tony, for welcoming on this podcast and just being able to chop it up, but also hopefully somebody is able to walk away with something great. But I'm very grateful for you guys' time too, thank you so much.

Tony

Remember to subscribe to our show on Apple Podcasts, Spotify or wherever you listen to podcasts. If you'd like to learn more about the topics mentioned in this episode, take a look at our show notes on the Life of Disney blog. Thanks again for listening to Life at Disney and make sure to join us for the next episode.

Tony

This episode was produced by Christine Torres and Jaron Kaufman, with contributions from Brianna Gold and Jessica Barnes. Editing was done by James Smartt Jr. and Luis Vega. Music arranged and produced by Nat Young Music Group Inc. Design and graphics by Kathie Collins and Luis Vega. And a special thank you goes out to the ESPN recruitment and social media team, ESPN Next, and Kevin McDonnell.