

**Effects of Creative Advertisement on XFL Fan Engagement**

**Focused on Arlington Renegades' TikTok Presence**

*Qualitative Analysis of Focus Group Discussion*

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Professor Jennifer Harker

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# **Participant Background**

## ***Background on Col. James Rupkalvis***

Participant 1

### **General Background**

- Rupkalvis is a 55-year-old male.
- He was born and raised in ScottsBluff, Nebraska.
  - Population of approximately 14,000.
- He has a background in competitive sports.
  - Football, basketball, baseball, track and field, and volleyball.
- Rupkalvis attended the United States Military Academy, Army West Point.
  - Graduating in 1990 with a Bachelor's degree in German.
  - Later graduated from the Naval Postgraduate School in 2011 with a Master's degree in logistics.
- He served over 30 years in the United States Army, retiring in 2020.

### **Contribution to this Study**

Col. James Rupkalvis is well-versed in football at all levels. Having played high school and college football, as well as being an avid watcher of both the NFL and XFL, Rupkalvis is well-versed in the rules and regulations of football. Rupkalvis contributed great insight into the ways that the older audiences recognized team branding and advertisements in the rise of the NFL, and how this can be translated into the XFL. While Rupkalvis does not have a TikTok profile, he mentioned that he enjoys watching advertisements or YouTube videos discussing team matters, showcasing game highlights, and finding humor in trends.

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## ***Background on Grace Wolf***

Participant 2

### **General Background**

- Wolf is a 21-year-old female.
- She was born and raised in Appleton, Wisconsin.
  - Population of approximately 75,000.
- She has a background in competitive sports.
  - Swimming and water polo.
- After graduating high school in 2020, Wolf accepted admission to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
  - She is currently in her sophomore year.
  - She is double-majoring in economics and environmental science.

### **Contribution to this Study**

Grace Wolf is an avid social media user. Wolf claims to have had TikTok since around 2019, making her an early user of the app. Wolf is also interested in the world of sports, following many NFL and MLB teams on both Instagram and TikTok. Grace provided great insight into the content she enjoys seeing and the content she finds to be most successful in building fanbases. While Wolf has not played football, she has participated in competitive sports and displayed interest in the accounts and content being produced by the XFL and its teams.

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## ***Background on Robert Bridger***

Participant 3

### **General Background**

- Bridger is a 20-year-old male.
- He was born and raised in Raleigh, North Carolina.
  - Population of approximately 470,000.
- He has a background in competitive sports.
  - Football, wrestling, and cross country.
- After graduating high school in 2021, Bridger accepted admission into the University of South Carolina.
  - He is currently in his sophomore year.
  - He is double-majoring in computer science and chemical engineering.

### **Contribution to this Study**

Robert Bridger is involved in both the world of football and the world of social media. Bridger is a self-proclaimed football “superfan”, rooting for the Carolina Panthers every season since he was born. Bridger also has multiple social media platforms, stating that he has had TikTok for around two years. Bridger downloaded TikTok during the COVID-19 pandemic like so many others and claims that he has found an interest in the pages of sports teams. Bridger specifically mentioned the Savannah Bananas and the NFL’s TikTok accounts.

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## ***Background on Priyanshu Saxena***

Participant 4

### **General Background**

- Saxena is a 20-year-old male.
- He was born and raised in Cary, North Carolina.
  - Population of approximately 177,000.
- He has a background in competitive sports.
  - Basketball and tennis.
- After graduating high school in 2021, Saxena accepted admission into the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
  - He is currently in his sophomore year.
  - He is double-majoring in economics and business.

### **Contribution to this Study**

Priyanshu Saxena is a follower of all things sports. Whether that be on social media, through stats and scores, or going to and watching games. Saxena mentioned that watching games is meant to be a spectacle and that the social media accounts, specifically of the XFL, should follow suit. Saxena has had TikTok for around two years and mentioned that he enjoys scrolling through the accounts of different athletes or teams. He provided great insight into content that he enjoys seeing, sharing different ideas of things that should be implemented more often.

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## ***Background on Olivia Rupkalvis***

Participant 5

### **General Background**

- Rupkalvis is a 25-year-old female.
- He was born and raised in Southport, North Carolina.
  - Population of approximately 4,000.
- She has a background in competitive sports.
  - Cross country, track and field, gymnastics, and soccer.
- Rupkalvis attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
  - Graduating in 2020 with a Bachelor's degree in Media and Journalism with a concentration in Advertising and Public Relations.
  - She currently works for a marketing and advertising agency in Charlotte, North Carolina.

### **Contribution to this Study**

Olivia Rupkalvis is a huge sports fan, an avid social media user, and works in advertising and marketing. Rupkalvis has worked in advertising for nearly three years and has worked with other sports teams. She also currently resides in Charlotte where there are a lot of minor league teams that she supports. Rupkalvis has been on TikTok for nearly three years and mentioned that she follows The Hockey Guys, the Savannah Bananas, and the NFL and multiple of its teams. Rupkalvis gave great insight into things that those accounts post, as well as the successful things that teams do to draw crowds to in-person events.

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## Thematic Data Analysis

Our group decided to conduct inductive research because we based the questions conducted in the focus group on the research questions we had previously designated. Through our observation and analysis of the focus group, we were able to identify patterns within the responses we received in our focus group. These patterns subsequently allowed us to create the themes of our research, which we later connected to the direct transcription of the responses our focus group subjects gave. Conducting inductive thematic analysis allowed us to connect our original research questions to the themes we observed in our focus group.

### Uncertainty and Lack of Knowledge about XFL

- Inconsistency on rule differences (important to highlight in posts)
  - Consistent and engaging branded content
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- **Participant 1: ...the XFL is not a minor league or lesser league NFL, but a lot of people think it is.**
  - **Participant 5: The only reason I know about [the XFL] is because I follow the Rock.**
  - **Participant 3: ...the differences in the league from the NFL, [I know] the XFL has different rules....I don't think I even knew that during this XFL season, so they need to do more about communicating that on social media.**
  - Participant 2: I didn't know that the rules were different until this conversation.
  - Participant 4: I mean the style of play, and I don't know if there are any rule differences between the XFL to the NFL. Just the things that will make it stand out to viewers.
  - Participant 4: So, whether that be in terms of how they play, I don't know, some of the things they do off the field,
  - Participant 1: I don't know if they have a cool logo or any of that type of identifying markings, but getting that out and known to a larger audience would help them a lot.

### NFL Advantages and Disadvantages (Opportunities)

- Legacy and longevity
  - Famous, high-profile players and coaches
  - Widespread publicity on major news, entertainment
  - New rules and regulations limit excitement
  - Brand recognition
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- **Participant 1: A lot of people think that the quality of football is less than it is in the NFL, but showing those highlights and showing those plays is important. I saw a couple of videos earlier of guys making phenomenal catches for touchdowns or whatever, they were NFL caliber if not better type catches. So, showing those to show that it is not a lesser quality of football, to me, is a good thing as a general football fan.**
  - **Participant 1: when I was your age, the Cowboys used to advertise on TV before all of their games and they called themselves “America’s Team.” They had a star similar to the American flag on their helmet, and so people identified with that. I think that’s key to these other teams, the XFL teams, that are just starting out to get that brand recognition.**
  - **Participant 5: nothing that the NFL does is too crazy or outrageous, so it’s all stuff that a smaller team can do too.**
  - Participant 5: [In response to an overall excitement factor] I think that some people miss that about NFL football,
  - Participant 1: NFL in recent years has put so many policies into place, that now it’s becoming known and a lot of people are calling it the “No Fun League”
  - Participant 2: [different gameplay rules] make [the XFL] a slightly different sport.
  - Participant 4: I know that I repost a lot of things for the teams that I follow and that I’m a fan of. But, the reason that I repost them is because I have been a fan for a long time.
  - Participant 5: I follow quite a few NFL teams on TikTok and they do a wide variety of stuff. I know the teams that get– I know the Chargers have a really good following, I think the Buccaneers too
  - Participant 5: I think also with the teams that you mentioned, they have a history of being very well known, and they are still good now, but historically they have won lots of Super Bowls.
  - Participant 2: Also, people like Aaron Rodgers or Tom Brady stick out so much that that person attracts more of a fanbase.



## Importance of Virality and Brand Engagement

- Fun, engaging content
  - Use TikTok trends to cater to XFL fans, football fans, and everyone in between
  - Use branded accounts to engage with fans through comments, etc
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- **Participant 1: I think the bottom line is that people want to have fun. I think that watching the videos is fun and may draw fans to the stadiums to watch the games and that type of thing.**
  - **Participant 5: The more people that follow them and participate with what they are posting, the more inclined they would be to attend or buy gear, stuff like that.**
  - **Participant 3: I feel like the XFL definitely needs to do a better job on social media.**
  - **Participant 5: I think that works well for not only their own fanbase, but also with random people, like me, whose videos just pop up on their “For You” page.**
  - **Participant 4: I think it is more if someone that I know, or if they are pretty prominent, posts something on their story I would at least look into it. I don’t know if I would end up being the biggest fan or not or if I will end up resonating with them, but it will at least get eyes on that thing.**
  - Participant 5: [In response to where posted TikTok trends would be more successful] Definitely the team account. The individual accounts aren’t always representative of the entire team.
  - Participant 5: I think it is really funny whenever big brands or teams play into and participate in the trends that everyone else is doing on TikTok. I think that it shows that they actually, well I know their social media manager does, but that they are actually watching the TikToks. I think that is really cute.
  - Participant 2: I think these are things that make more people pay attention because then they have to vote, rather than just clicking through where they might not pay attention.
  - Participant 4: [referencing player actions off the field] ...they have to do something different to stand out and entertain that’s not related to the talent aspect
  - Participant 4: I think the more eyes people draw to this, I mean I think it is a relatively new league, the more publicity that it will gain.
  - Participant 2: For myself, I mostly interact with [different sports social media accounts] around big games or championships. It is very time of the year oriented or as I am seeking out information. It’s not like a constant.
  - Participant 4: ...the Arlington team, will have to do something kind of different to stand out because the best talent will inevitably go to the NFL. Just because of the legacy that the NFL has built

## Community & Accessibility

- Non-local “Bandwagon” Fans cultivate a larger fanbase
  - Fans appreciate affordability
  - Supporting (and promoting) kids, students, and families
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- **Participant 2: When I lived in Chattanooga, I don’t think that I had ever been to a minor league baseball game, but we went almost every week just because they were so fun and they did giveaways at every single one.**
  - **Participant 5: I’ve only been to preseason Panthers games just because I can’t afford to go to an actual one, but we go to the baseball and hockey games all the time because tickets are easy to get and they always do tons of fun stuff at them. I almost like to go to those games more.**
  - **Participant 3: ... if the XFL teams do a better job posting clips from when the games are happening, so people can be talking about them. Like on Twitter, Instagram, or TikTok, just so fans can communicate with their friends back and forth while the game is going on.**
  - Participant 2: They would have free ticket days for students in Chattanooga...the fans you can really get engagement just by making it affordable.
  - Participant 5: Charlotte having all of these minor league teams, it's a lot more accessible for people to go to games.
  - Participant 2: I would say that at least for the two that I know the most about, the Packers is a publicly owned team with really famous players. So, a lot of people feel like when they live there, they own it. Just because you literally can be an owner.
  - Participant 2: NFL has done to attract younger people is the PLAY 60 stuff.
  - Participant 2: ...Some sort of challenge or way to relate to kids’ teams.

### Content Ideas from Participants

- Post content of the game, while said game is going on for immediate fan engagement
  - Raffles, contests, and games both on social media and in-person publicized on social media
  - Game day content of enthusiastic fans
  - Past and present player and coach features
  - Funny TikTok trends show relevancy
  - Highlight rules different from the XFL, and the exciting plays that result because of them
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- **Participant 2: ...for people that may not be as into sports, [or] people that are into sports but not in love with football, like if you are trying to get it to random people's "For You" pages, ... funny, short, and more comedy based TikToks tend to go over well. These might not be about the actual game, and that sounds bad, but that might just resonate with a wider audience on top of having a super large amount of game highlights and content.**
  - **Participant 3: Since there are differences in the actual [XFL] game and strategy of it, I think they should let that be known to people.**
  - **Participant 3: my favorite, especially the NFL does a really good job of this... [posting a] really good clip from a game, they will post it as the game is going on**
  - Participant 2: interactable things are fun...like if you have a story where the fans can vote about which thing is better, which one is more impressive. I think these are things that make more people pay attention because then they have to vote, rather than just clicking through where they might not pay attention.
  - Participant 2: really small raffle things..attract people [i.e. tag 3 people in the comments to win]
  - Participant 4: ...Halftime contests at games. I know for basketball for example, they have like a half-court shooting thing where if a random fan gets a half-court shot they get a certain amount of money or a free car...when that thing happens, something cool, it always goes viral.
  - Participant 5: The [NFL Seattle] Seahawks have had a Dachshund race at one of their games over the season and it went like crazy viral
  - Participant 5: I think a college basketball team had a baby race
  - Participant 5: [Referencing a Charlotte minor league hockey team] It's called "Winning Wednesdays," ...if you come to a game on a Wednesday and the team wins, you get a ticket to the next Wednesday's game.
  - Participant 5: ...[feature] themed nights
  - Participant 5: ...well-known players starting off and doing interviews... a day in the life, or them just making videos just to get people to see them would be cool to start out.
  - Participant 1: ...Celebration rules and things like that after scoring are different [from the NFL] as well

- Participant 2: [Referencing a Chattanooga minor league baseball game] ...[This game] was like guessing the price of this item at the grocery store and the closest person to guess won like \$10 and the item. Whatever it was, even if it was just a jar of peanut butter.
- Participant 1: I think they have to leverage their coaches too. I mean the Renegades' coach is Bob Stoops, who is a National Championship-winning coach, at least at the collegiate level, but that is pretty well-known across the ranks. So, it's not just the players, I think it's the coaches too.
- Participant 4: [Referencing past NFL players who are actually going to the XFL] ...going into the XFL will definitely turn some heads and gain some viewers, in my opinion at least.'

Our deductive approach to this thematic analysis allowed us to use our extensive research and prior knowledge to attempt to guide and represent our participants' responses. As cited in our Secondary Research document, Maria Ngangom found in 2020 that use of TikTok is correlated with brand engagement and buying behavior in her participants between 18-23 years of age. Though our focus group varied in age, we gained valuable details to support this statement: traits unique to the XFL that fans are interested in and should be publicized, myriad specific and relevant content ideas, as well as when and where to post them, and, overall, the importance of shared viral content to engage fans, regardless of their prior familiarity with the XFL.

# Focus Group Guide

Preliminary focus group questions:

- What excites you the most about football season? What excited you the most about the XFL launch?
- How often do you interact with sports teams' social media accounts and in what way? What have sports teams done with their social media that has stood out to you? How do you think social media helps/harms a team's image or branding?
- What do you believe the "it factor" is that makes a team like the Cowboys (Packers, Patriots, etc.) have such a strong fanbase and a team like the Texans (Titans, Cardinals, etc.) have such a weak one?
- What team do you cheer for and why?

We slightly altered our questions for them to target the branding side of sports teams. We attempted to ask our participants about how the XFL can incorporate different content to increase fan engagement, something that aligns with our research questions.

## Questions Asked:

### Interviewer

I'm going to lead the discussion just by asking the questions and following up, but I want you all to feel comfortable sharing anything you want. Your opinions, feelings, reactions toward different things you have seen in the XFL or TikTok through advertising of any companies. Potentially the NFL or other sports teams, anything that you believe is successful in promoting a company.

So the first question is:

What do you believe the "it" factor for a team such as the Cowboys, the Patriots, or the Packers is? The factor that contributes to their strong fanbase, people willing to buy tickets, merchandise, or other things. What do you think these teams have that others may not?

### Interviewer

So, how do you think that the advertising of those big teams with big-name players could translate to smaller teams that don't have such well-known players?

### Interviewer

Do you think maybe advertising more of the well-known players that have gone from big colleges or the NFL to the XFL would be successful?

### Interviewer

In the terms of TikTok, have you guys seen advertisements or posts for either the NFL or just different NFL teams? If so, what do you think those posts on the NFL's with the well-known players, the humor, or the interviews, or the game highlights would be most successful to translate to a smaller league?

### Interviewer

How would you guys or have you interacted with different sports social media accounts?

### Interviewer

What would you say is a good, well-rounded mix of like game highlights, interviews, silly TikToks, day in the life – what would you say a ratio each of you would want to see out of a brand?

### Interviewer

Do you think that posting on social media about the fans, the experience of an XFL fan may attract more fans, rather than trying to advertise? If you post more about fan opportunities or the over spectacle for the fans, would you potentially gain more.

### Interviewer

What have been some things that different sports teams have done on social media that have stuck out to you individually? Whether that be Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, commercial advertising, anything like that.

### Interviewer

Do you think that in the sense of social media or just online interaction and television, are there any advertisements that have stuck out? Maybe different companies using players in commercials or I know the thing with Pete Nance and the lemon Oreos went a little viral. Is there anything that has stuck in your brain from past seasons?

### Interviewer

I think that out of the trends aspect, would you think that maybe having the players participate in the trends would be successful on the actual Arlington Renegades TikTok account or their personal accounts?

### Interviewer

Do you guys think that the building of TikTok or just social media in general will translate to fan engagement and fans coming to get to know what the XFL actually is?

## Recap/Synopsis

- **The XFL should emphasize what they have that the NFL lacks.**
  - The XFL has different rules from the NFL, and the original XFL emphasized on the theatrics and excitement that was common in the WWE. With the NFL gaining this reputation for being the "no fun league," the XFL can capitalize on the lenience of their rules and the theatrics that they promise.
- **The XFL needs to do a better job on social media.**
  - Instant replays, player takeovers, player "day in the life" videos, and even celebrity partnerships can be a way to bring the XFL social media to the same level as NFL. During an NFL game, people will immediately retweet plays on Twitter, and XFL can do the same.
- **The XFL can have a strong fanbase and following even if they are not the dominant or main football league.**
  - Like Charlotte's minor league hockey team and minor league baseball team, the Renegades can implement similar ideas like "Winning Wednesdays" and "Bark in the Park" to engage fans within the community. A “minor” or lesser-known league doesn't have to equate to a minor following.

# Focus Group Script

## Interviewer

Hi everyone. Thank you so much for coming. The whole point of this is so that you can discuss amongst the group the different questions. I'm going to lead the discussion just by asking the questions and following up, but I want you all to feel comfortable sharing anything you want. Your opinions, feelings, reactions toward different things you have seen in the XFL or TikTok through advertising of any companies. Potentially the NFL or other sports teams, anything that you believe is successful in promoting a company.

So the first question is:

What do you believe the "it" factor for a team such as the Cowboys, the Patriots, or the Packers is? The factor that contributes to their strong fanbase, people willing to buy tickets, merchandise, or other things. What do you think these teams have that others may not?

## Participant 2 (Wolf)

I would say that at least for the two that I know the most about, the Packers is a publicly owned team with really famous players. So, a lot of people feel like when they live there, they own it. Just because you literally can be an owner. Also, people like Aaron Rodgers or Tom Brady stick out so much that that person attracts more of a fanbase. People can really touch more on that.

## Participant 5 (O. Rupkalvis)

I think also with the teams that you mentioned, they have a history of being very well-known, and they are still good now, but historically they have won lots of Super Bowls. I think a lot of people recognize that and have kind of hopped on that bandwagon to root for those teams.

## Interviewer

With lesser-known teams, especially within the XFL.

If you are not familiar with the XFL it is a smaller football league, however not a minor league. There are eight teams, and while they are not super well-known like NFL teams are, they are becoming more and more recognized. Our specific team we are looking into is the Arlington Renegades in Arlington, Texas.

So, how do you think that the advertising of those big teams with big name players could translate to smaller teams that don't have such well known players?

## Participant 1 (J. Rupkalvis)

So, I think, what I was going to say to your first question is:

A team like the Cowboys is all about brand recognition. I know I'm a lot older than you guys, but when I was growing up, when I was your age, the Cowboys used to advertise on TV before all of their games and they called themselves "America's Team." They had a star similar to the



American flag on their helmet, and so people identified with that. I think that's a key to these other teams, the XFL teams, that are just starting out to get that brand recognition. I don't know if they have a cool logo or any of that type of identifying markings, but getting that out and known to a larger audience would help them a lot.

#### Participant 4 (Saxena)

To build on that, a team in the XFL, like you said the Arlington team, will have to do something kind of different to stand out because the best talent will inevitably go to the NFL. Just because of the legacy that the NFL has built. So, whether that be in terms of how they play, I don't know, some of the things they do off the field, they have to do something different to stand out and entertain that's not related to the talent aspect. Just because the best talent will go to the NFL.

#### Interviewer

Yeah that is a great point. A lot of past NFL players are actually going to the XFL now, which is pretty cool. Do you think maybe advertising more of the well-known players that have gone from big colleges or NFL to the XFL would be successful?

#### Participant 4 (Saxena)

I think so. Again, to carry that legacy already and having already built a following in the bigger league. Especially for their fanbase that they built seeing that. Them going into the XFL will definitely turn some heads and gain some viewers, in my opinion at least.

#### Participant 1 (J. Rupkalvis)

I think they have to leverage their coaches too. I mean the Renegades' coach is Bob Stoops, who is a National Championship winning coach, at least at the collegiate level, but that is pretty well-known across the ranks. So, it's not just the players, I think it's the coaches too.

#### Interviewer

Yeah that's a super good point.

I'm not sure if all of you have TikTok, I know that a few of you do. But, in the terms of TikTok, have you guys seen advertisements or posts for either the NFL or just different NFL teams. If so, what do you think those posts on the NFL's with the well-known players, the humor, or the interviews, or the game highlights would be most successful to translate to a smaller league?

#### Participant 5 (O. Rupkalvis)

I follow quite a few NFL teams on TikTok and they do a wide variety of stuff. I know the teams that get— I know the Chargers have a really good following, I think the Buccaneers too— they do prank videos, I think most of them are humor for TikTok. I think that works well for not only their own fanbase, but also with random people, like me, whose videos just pop up on their “For You” page. So, I do think that the well-known players starting off and doing interviews, maybe

having them do a day in the life or them just making videos just to get people to see them would be cool to start out. Then, they could definitely get into the stuff that the bigger NFL teams do. But, nothing that the NFL does is too crazy or outrageous, so it's all stuff that a smaller team can do too.

#### Participant 2 (Wolf)

I feel like for people that may not be as into sports, like if you are trying to get a base for people that are into sports but not in love with football, like if you are trying to get it to random people's "For You" pages, you could probably do things more focused on being funny, short, and more comedy based TikToks tend to go over well. These might not be about the actual game, and that sounds bad, but that might just resonate with a wider audience on top of having a super large amount of game highlights and content.

#### Interviewer

Yeah absolutely, especially since TikTok is more of a casual side of social media platforms, so without having to post all of their ticket sales and all of the stuff they might have to put on Instagram or Facebook. They can have more fun with it.

How would you guys or have you interacted with different sports social media accounts?

#### Participant 2 (Wolf)

For myself, I mostly interact with them around big games or championships. It is very time of the year oriented or as I am seeking out information. It's not like a constant.

#### Participant 4 (Saxena)

I know that I repost a lot of things for the teams that I follow and that I'm a fan of. But, the reason that I repost them is because I have been a fan for a long time, so I don't know if I would promote the XFL exactly. But, I think that is a great way to get more eyes onto the post, especially if people are reposting things on their stories and stuff like that.

#### Interviewer

Yeah, that's very true. I know the Rock, obviously he is a partial owner of the XFL, so he does a good job promoting.

#### Participant 4 (Saxena)

I think it is more if someone that I know, or if they are pretty prominent, posts something on their story I would at least look into it. I don't know if I would end up being the biggest fan or not or if I will end up resonating with them, but it will at least get eyes on that thing. I think the more eyes people draw to this, I mean I think it is a relatively new league, the more publicity that it will gain. I mean the style of play, and I don't know if there are any rule differences for the XFL to the NFL. Just the things that will make it stand out to viewers.

### Interviewer

What would you say is a good, well-rounded mix of like game highlights, interviews, silly TikToks, day in the life. What would you say a ratio each of you would want to see out of a brand?

### Participant 3 (Bridger)

Well my favorite, especially the NFL does a really good job of this, is like when a team gets a Pick 6 or whatever team you follow has a really good clip from a game, they will post it as the game is going on. Like you will look at it and it's posted six minutes ago, they just did it. I think that if the XFL teams do a better job posting clips from when the games are happening, so people can be talking about them. Like on Twitter, Instagram, or TikTok, just so fans can communicate with their friends back and forth while the game is going on. I think that would be better and they would get more fans.

### Participant 1 (J. Rupkalvis)

I think that that is probably a key thing because what you started out with was that the XFL is not a minor league or lesser league NFL, but a lot of people think it is. A lot of people think that the quality of football is less than it is in the NFL, but showing those highlights and showing those plays is important. I saw a couple videos earlier of guys making phenomenal catches for touchdowns or whatever, they were NFL caliber if not better type catches. So, showing those to show that it is not a lesser quality of football, to me, is a good thing as a general football fan.

### Interviewer

That is such a good point.

The XFL has definitely had some interesting things go on. I have a little folder of things on TikTok that have gone viral from the XFL, and just because they have different rules than the NFL there are some crazy things that go on. Just different catches wise or you can drop the ball, pick it back up, and run the other way, so definitely the different play aspect. I don't know if any of you have seen the Beer Snake for the D.C. Defenders, but that has gone pretty viral on TikTok.

Do you think that posting on social media about the fans, the experience of an XFL fan may attract more fans, rather than trying to advertise? If you post more about fan opportunities or the over spectacle for the fans, would you potentially gain more.

### Participant 2 (Wolf)

I think that interactable things are fun. Like if you have a story where the fans can vote about which thing is better, which one is more impressive. I think these are things that make more people pay attention because then they have to vote, rather than just clicking through where they might not pay attention. But with polls, you would get to give a little bit of your input into it. So that kind of stuff might be fun to start throwing in, or like really small raffle things that big

techniques that places use to attract people and try to apply them to an Instagram or social media model.

**Participant 1 (J. Rupkalvis)**

I think the bottom line is that people want to have fun. I think that watching the videos is fun and may draw fans to the stadiums to watch the games and that type of thing.

**Interviewer**

These are all such great insights into this question.

What have been some things that different sports teams have done on social media that have stuck out to you individually? Whether that be Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, commercial advertising, anything like that.

**Participant 4 (Saxena)**

One thing that I have noticed almost inevitably goes viral, but it might prove to be a little expensive or might have to get the right sponsors is when they have halftime contests at games. I know for basketball for example, they have like a half-court shooting thing where if a random fan gets a half-court shot they get a certain amount of money or a free car, just something cool like that. I know that when that thing happens, something cool, it always goes viral. I think that would be one thing to look into, it may be expensive potentially, but cool.

**Interviewer**

Yeah, but that would be a great idea nonetheless, to have some type of fan interaction on social media rather than just having the players, coaches, or the game on it.

**Participant 5 (O. Rupkalvis)**

You can do, like for the halftime stuff, some cheaper things too. Like with the Seahawks have had a Dachshund race at one of their games over the season and it went like crazy viral, and I think a college basketball team had a baby race, that might be a little extreme for a football field, but the dog race is funny.

**Interviewer**

I think that there are a couple teams that have hosted different fan things that wouldn't be expensive. Like winning T-shirts or I know a lot of NFL teams have contests that are like "How far can you throw a football" that are always interesting.

**Participant 5 (O. Rupkalvis)**

I think maybe doing cool things in the games. Like we have a minor league hockey team in Charlotte and they have it's called "Winning Wednesdays," and it's where if you come to a game on a Wednesday and the team wins you get a ticket to the next Wednesday's game. So maybe

something like that, or like themed nights, I know a lot of the teams here do “Bark in the Park” and every night of the week or every game they have something different. These attract people because Charlotte has a lot of minor league teams, but they are always very popular with everyone here.

#### Interviewer

Do you think that in the sense of social media or just online interaction and television, are there any advertisements that have stuck out? Maybe different companies using players in commercials or I know the thing with Pete Nance and the lemon Oreos went a little viral. Is there anything that has stuck in your brain from past seasons?

#### Participant 2 (Wolf)

This is kind of related to the last question and kind of this one. I think that one thing that the NFL has done to attract younger people is the PLAY 60 stuff. They have really engaged kids and there are a million and one advertisements about healthy eating and PLAY 60. That might be something good, some sort of challenge or way to relate to kids teams. That is definitely a market that is super saturated with the NBA and NFL, but there are perks that would be huge. Kids are like the next generation of watching.

I think quirky things like the Oreos tend to go viral, but I feel like that is hard to plan without being so off the cuff and being funny. Like that wasn't a planned thing.

#### Interviewer

Yeah definitely. You have to kind of have stuff like that happen naturally for it to work out. I know that in the NFL right now there is a big thing about a lot of the players that people find attractive, those TikToks tend to go pretty viral, or just playing into any special trends.

#### Participant 5 (O. Rupkalvis)

Definitely, I think it is really funny whenever big brands or teams play into and participate in the trends that everyone else is doing on TikTok. I think that it shows that they actually, well I know their social media manager does, but that they are actually watching the TikToks. I think that is really cute.

#### Interviewer

I think that out of the trends aspect, would you think that maybe having the players participate in the trends would be successful on the actual Arlington Renegades TikTok account or their personal accounts?

#### Participant 5 (O. Rupkalvis)

Definitely the team account. The individual accounts aren't always representative of the entire team.

### Interviewer

Do you guys think that the building of TikTok or just social media in general will translate to fan engagement and fans coming to get to know what the XFL actually is?

### Participant 5 (O. Rupkalvis)

I think so. The only reason I know about it is because I follow the Rock. The more people that follow them and participate with what they are posting, the more inclined they would be to attend or buy gear, stuff like that.

### Participant 3 (Bridger)

I feel like the XFL definitely needs to do a better job on social media. Just talking about the differences in the league from the NFL, the XFL has different rules. I know there is a rule in the XFL where you can pass forward twice and then they don't get extra points like you do in the NFL. Like you have to run all of your extra points after touchdowns. Since there are differences in the actual game and strategy of it, I think they should let that be known to people. I don't think I even knew that during this XFL season, so they need to do more about communicating that on social media.

### Interviewer

Yeah definitely. I think that a lot of the TikToks that did go viral are the different rules. People see that as "Wow, they can do that." Whether it is the double pass forward or that they can hit in ways that the NFL can't, kind of body slamming people. Since originally the XFL was kind of a mix between wrestling and football, I think it is interesting to show people how different it is. Saying, "Look, they can do things in this that you haven't seen before."

### Participant 5 (O. Rupkalvis)

I think that some people miss that about NFL football, so that might be something to pull them in for sure.

### Participant 1 (J. Rupkalvis)

I think the other thing is that the NFL in recent years have put so many policies into place, that now it's becoming known and a lot of people are calling it the "No Fun League," the NFL. But, I think that the celebration rules and things like that after scoring are different as well and they can have more of an ability to do funny things after scoring, whereas the NFL has it so regulated after scoring that guys don't even do touchdown dances anymore.

### Participant 2 (Wolf)

Yeah, I will say too, I didn't know that the rules were different until this conversation. I feel like that is something that is intriguing because it does make it a slightly different sport. But, I don't think anyone views it like that. Highlighting that on their accounts would be interesting to see.

### Interviewer

Well that is all of the questions that we have, but if anyone has any closing statements they are obviously welcome. This has been such a great conversation.

### Participant 2 (Wolf)

The one last thing I'll say, going back to what Olivia [Participant 5] said about the whole city really loving the teams, even if they are minor league. I completely agree with that, however much a team engages with the community, like when I lived in Chattanooga, I don't think that I had ever been to a minor league baseball game, but we went almost every week just because they were so fun and they did giveaways at every single one. It was mostly like a game, it was like guessing the price of this item at the grocery store and the closest person to guess won like \$10 and the item. Whatever it was, even if it was just a jar of peanut butter.

But, anyway, it was always entertaining and fun, so I think that if you can do those little things for schools, like they would have free ticket days for students in Chattanooga, or the fans you can really get engagement just by making it affordable.

### Participant 5 (O. Rupkalvis)

Yeah, I think that's a major thing. Just like Charlotte having all of these minor league teams, it's a lot more accessible for people to go to games, and a lot more affordable than compared to NFL games. Like I've only been to preseason Panthers games just because I can't afford to go to an actual one, but we go to the baseball and hockey games all the time because tickets are easy to get and they always do tons of fun stuff at them. I almost like to go to those games more.

### Interviewer

Yeah, that is a big driving factor too for the XFL. The XFL is very fan-oriented, I mean their least expensive tickets that they have, I mean they definitely have higher ticket prices for the different seats, but the least expensive tickets are \$18. That's a big point, but they don't really come across saying, "Hey, we are really cheap, a lot cheaper than the NFL." But, yeah, that would also be a great thing to start incorporating in there.

Alright, I just want to thank you guys so much for participating in the focus group, it really means a lot to us. We will definitely take all of your comments and put them to good use.