

Rachelle MADRIGAL

Bradenton
Marauders General
Manager

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Being the first or only woman in a field dominated by males is not for the unprepared or unproven. With passion and knowledge, the woman will climb the career ladder wearing different hats. From a college intern in 2006 to Coordinator of Sales and Business Operations in 2007 to Manager of Sales and Marketing in 2010, Rachelle Madrigal progressed until her promotion two years ago to General Manager of the Bradenton Marauders, the minor league team of the Pittsburgh Pirates, and Director, Sales and Marketing/Florida Operations. She is the only female general manager in the Florida State League and was named the League's Female Executive of the Year in 2014.

"I do everything for the team that's not related to baseball operations. I'm responsible for the business side of the team including ticket sales, stadium operations, marketing, communications, public relations, community relations, planning promotions and theme nights, securing entertainment for games, and corporate sales. In high school I attended a presentation about opportunities to work in the business side of sports. Since I grew up playing softball and cheering on the Boston Red Sox, the business side of sports sparked my interest and I received my Bachelor's degree in sports management from UMass-Amherst," she says.

Rachelle—looking more like a grad student than the general manager of a minor league baseball team—exudes excitement about her career. "Baseball is my calling. What could be better than coming to work every day at the ballpark? This is a 24/7 business, but a lot of fun in a high-energy environment. I'm part of something very special bringing joy to people on game day. It is amazing what we do. The reward is the moments when you see the impact on someone's life. Baseball is the platform for giving people memories for life. My baseball family is my second family. I'm very fortunate to have gotten in the door of the organization during the early years. I witnessed tremendous growth and investment in the local community. The Pirates have a long tradition of community involvement by supporting education in Manatee County, Adopt a School, Marauders summer reading program, and youth sports leagues. We want to get kids to games for family-friendly entertainment. We partner with the City of Bradenton to grow the area where the stadium is located as a destination entertainment district."

Rachelle is all about excellent customer service and fan amenities. "My major focus is on customer service which the Pirates excel in at their home PNC Park in Pittsburgh. We offer employee incentive-based programs because we expect every employee to go above and beyond to assure that our visitors have an experience they will remember. All of our employees (including seasonal stadium employees) receive intensive customer service training every year as well as a daily briefing where they receive the customer service tip of the day. We tell them to have fun, but think of the fans first. We have over 200 seasonal employees working spring training and 75 during the Marauders season."

The Bradenton Marauders are the Class A-Advanced affiliate of the Pittsburgh Pirates. After the 2009 season the Pirates purchased the Cincinnati Reds' Florida State League affiliate and in October 2009 the Bradenton Marauders became the newest member of the 12-

team FSL and one of 160 affiliated minor leagues of a major league baseball team. Not adopting the Pirates name, the team became the Bradenton Marauders playing 70 home games at LECOM Park (formerly McKechnie Field. The Pirates are celebrating its 50th anniversary in Bradenton which is the third longest tenure of any spring training team in Florida and the Marauders are celebrating its 10th anniversary. Rachelle says that all those years were spent building a great tradition of baseball in Bradenton for 365 days a year. The local economic impact during spring training alone is \$30 million. In addition to LECOM Park, Pirate City is a few miles away and hosts outside corporate groups, camps, sports nutrition events, adult baseball groups and tournaments, and the Pirates spring training practice until the team moves to LECOM Park for games.

The original stadium was built in 1923 and the Pirates have made sweeping improvements over the years in response to the growth and popularity of spring training and minor league games in Bradenton. In 2006 the park received updated lights and a new visitor team clubhouse. Fan amenities in 2013 include a 19,000 square foot boardwalk to the outfield, new concessions, a larger fan plaza, covered bleachers and new seats bringing the seating total to 8,500. In 2015 the home clubhouse was renovated and two years later a video board was installed in center field.

Rachelle talks about Florida's weather—a lot. One computer is constantly tuned to the weather. She says the challenge is controlling the uncontrollable weather and managing the timing. Perhaps the summer rain will come during a promotion that has been planned for months. Sometimes she can work around the rain and still pull off the event, sometimes not. She said managing curve balls is part of the job. She plans a full schedule of promotions such as Pirates & Princesses Night, My Sun-coast Bark in the Park (Doggy Costume Contest and Pups Run the Bases), shirt giveaways, post-game fireworks, Kids Backpack Giveaway, Disability Awareness Night, and Fan Appreciation Night.

Rachelle describes her work ethic as leading by example and working side-by-side with staff. Her expectation for herself is to do everything at the highest level. She may leave the park at 5:30 p.m. during spring training when games begin at 1 p.m., but she may not leave until 10:30 p.m. or later during the Marauders season when games are in the evening. She admits to challenges with work/life balance and making time for both.

While an intern Rachelle met her future husband Victor, head groundskeeper at LECOM Park. They have 17-month old identical twins Dominic and Quinton. Her favorite non-work activities are spending time with her husband and children, listening to 90s music, visiting Disney World, and traveling—already they have traveled to 37 states by car. They plan to take the boys to visit relatives in the Dominican Republic (she is fluent in Spanish) when they are a little older.

Rachelle currently serves on the Manatee County Substance Abuse Coalition Board of Trustees and the Manatee Memorial Foundation Women's Action Committee and was formerly a member of the PACE Center for Girls Manatee Board of Directors and the Gulf Coast Latin Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. 

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