

A FORTY YEAR DECISION

By Jake May



Most collegiate football players go pro in something other than football.

According to recent data compiled by the NCAA, only a little more than one percent of football players from FBS, FCS and Division II programs get drafted to the NFL each year. Being drafted or signing as an undrafted free agent does not guarantee a roster spot or a paycheck, and the average NFL career lasts slightly more than three years according to the NFLPA. This makes preparation for life after football paramount to the student-athlete experience – even for those with professional aspirations.

It seems straightforward, but at Northwestern, balancing the academic rigors of a top university with the demands of playing a Division I sport in a Power-5 conference is a tall task.

With that in mind, former Northwestern tennis player and current Board of Trustees member David Kabiller '85, '87 MBA created the Irving Kabiller Memorial Award with a generous donation to the university in memory of his late father back in 2013. The \$5,000 grants, awarded after a lengthy application, presentation and interview process, annually offer four or five winners the opportunity to spend the money on professional development opportunities. The award is run through the NU for Life student-athlete career development office and overseen by Kabiller himself as well as Assistant A.D. for Career Enhancement and Employer Relations Julie Hammer.

The 2017 class marks the fifth Kabiller Award group in school history, and four of the 23 all-time recipients are current or former members of the Northwestern football team.

Arthur Omilian, a member of the inaugural 2013 class and a former kicker for the Wildcats, used the grant to attend a sports analytics conference at MIT as well as to set up meetings in New York City with high-level professionals across the finance world. His current job as the Senior Associate of Mergers and Acquisitions at Southern Veterinary Partners in Birmingham, Alabama, does not directly deal with either of the sectors he explored with the grant, but Omilian credits the Kabiller Award with providing him the opportunity to explore the day-to-day lives of people in his desired fields before settling on a different path.

"I didn't want to be a guy in a back office crunching numbers who wasn't part of a team," said Omilian. "I credit Kabiller for forcing me to think about all possibilities."

Former Wildcat wide receiver Austin Carr applied for and won the award the next year after speaking with Omilian about the opportunity and his experiences as a recipient. Currently pursuing professional football as a wide receiver,

KABILLER AWARD



**\$5,000 GRANT FOR
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**



**BEGAN IN 2012 FOLLOWING
DONATION BY DAVID KABILLER**



**AWARDED TO 4-5 JUNIOR
STUDENT-ATHLETES
EVERY YEAR**

HAS BEEN USED IN FIELDS INCLUDING:



JOURNALISM



HUMAN RIGHTS



MEDICINE



BANKING



STATISTICS



ENTERTAINMENT



"The Irving Kabiller Award identifies outstanding student-athletes for the student, athlete and person they are. The award recognizes excellence in a multidimensional way and it will identify future leaders. It encourages self-discovery and the continued pursuit of excellence beyond one's sport and the classroom."

—DAVID KABILLER

er with the New Orleans Saints, Carr planned to work on a non-profit basis with youth in El Salvador but wound up attending two conferences dealing with online fundraising and internet marketing. Carr's interest in fundraising persists despite his busy schedule, as he volunteers weekly at Athletes for Action, an organization that forges connections between Christianity and sports for faith-engaged athletes, coaches and fans.

"I'm still thankful to David and Irving Kabiller," said Carr. "Once you win, you get to join that special group of student athletes that received [Kabiller's] advice and care."

Following in their footsteps was former defensive back Matthew Harris in 2015. Now in the process of transferring to an advisory position at The Academy Group in Chicago – an organization that flips revenue from financial investments into development opportunities for underserved youth in communities across America – Harris used his interest in organizational change and educational policy to host a two-day seminar titled "Embrace Yours."

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**New Orleans Saint
Wide Receiver
Austin Carr**



The event connected disadvantaged children from the Evanston area – many with minority backgrounds – with mentors from the Northwestern student-athlete community to instill a sense of pride and self-respect while working to set and achieve personal goals. Harris said planning and hosting a weekend of activities and talks laid the foundation for what he does now.

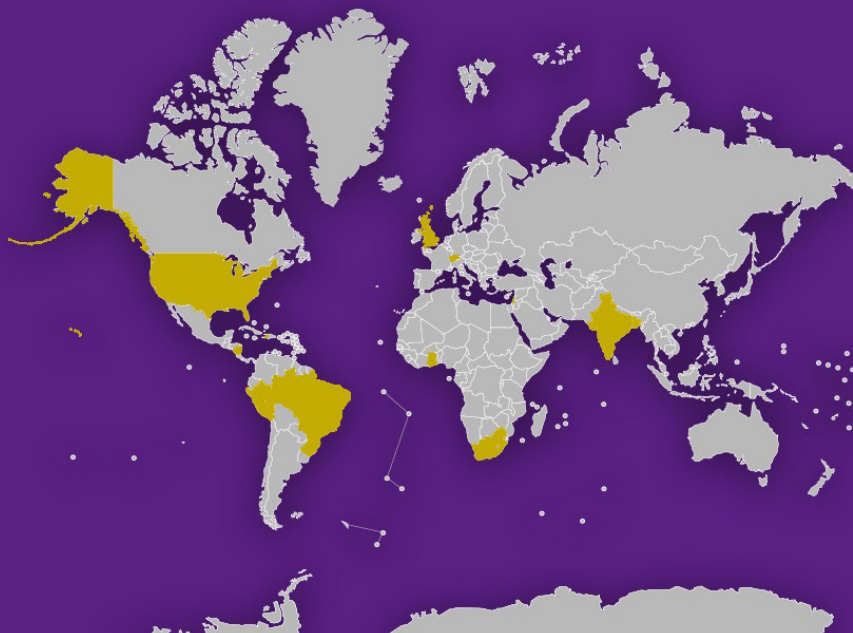
"I love investing in young people," said Harris. "It gave me a taste of what the work is like and what it means to be someone who gives back."

The most recent winner of the award is redshirt senior offensive lineman Tommy Doles, who is now pursuing a degree from Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management. Doles, advised by Carr to apply for the grant, first traveled to Cuzco, Peru, and worked with vulnerable children in an afterschool program during spring break of his junior year. He then took a trip to Washington, D.C., and met with officers and generals in the army as well as members of the FBI and CIA to talk about leadership in the context of serving America. With the remaining

AROUND THE WORLD

Through the Irving Kabiller Memorial Award, Northwestern student-athletes have had the opportunity to conduct professional development experience, both in the United States as well as abroad.

**NICARAGUA
PERU
HAITI
BRAZIL
INDIA
GHANA
SWITZERLAND
SOUTH AFRICA
ISRAEL
UNITED KINGDOM
UNITED STATES**



funds from the grant, Doles traveled to South Africa with Athletes in Action on a service trip.

Despite plans to pursue the NFL, Doles also expressed a desire to attend Army Officer Cadet School, a dream harbored since his youth. The time spent in D.C. allowed Doles to meet “high-capacity people who are good at what they do” and to understand the tangible benefits of leading and mentoring army cadets. Doles mentioned many of the officials he spoke to described their time spent as junior officers as some of the most rewarding of their lives.

“I saw it was meaningful work for them,” said Doles. “They could be anywhere, but believe so strongly in what they are doing. People wonder about the intentions of bureaucrats, but I don’t have those concerns.”

The Kabiller Award provides Northwestern student-athletes with advanced professional development opportunities found at only a few other universities across the nation. All four winners from the football team serve as proof of the incredible work the grant does spurring on the careers of student-athletes. When asked to offer advice to future winners, all four gave variations on the same answer, put most succinctly by Doles.

“Show that you have a plan but be open to new doors opening,” he said.

Omilian agreed, adding, “It sets NU apart from other university athletic programs. Once I get to the level professionally where I can give back, I’d like to do something along these lines.”

Carr offered up some more precise advice, saying that, “If you’re sure about what you want to do, chase people who are pioneers. Chase a person in that field who you’d love to meet up with.”

Harris offered this thought that sums up the intent behind the Kabiller Award: “It’s amazing that someone from the NU community is invested in you and believes in you and your aspirations,” he said. “Make sure it’s an opportunity that sets you up for the future.” **N**

