THE GOLD COAST EXECUTIVE FORUM is a series of meetings in which local C-level executives and owners of substantial businesses are invited to meet, socialize and listen to a panel discussion. The series is produced by the San Fernando Valley Business Journal and Brent Reinke of the Musick Peeler & Garrett law firm in Westlake Village. Sponsors are Cresa, Growth Partners, Holthouse Carlin Van Trigt and Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse.
The third Gold Coast Executive Forum was held Sept. 19 at the Sports Academy in Thousand Oaks. The event series, launched earlier this year, brings together business founders and C-level executives for networking and panel discussions about relevant topics in the business world.

“We tried to create an organization that’s really business-friendly,” said Brent Reinke of the law firm Musick Peer & Carrett, who founded an earlier iteration of the forum and was panel moderator for the evening. The current version of the Gold Coast forum is produced by Reinke and the Business Journal.

“The whole point is for executives to network with one another and develop professional relationships as well as friendships over time,” Reinke said. “Our events are set up to be social in nature as well as educational.”

The title of the latest forum was “The Business of Sports…Game On.” Panelists included Chad Faulkner, founder and chief executive of the Sports Academy; Bruce Warwick, director of operations for the Los Angeles Rams football team, and Dan Jelinek, senior vice president of global sales, marketing and commerce at Easton Diamond Sports.

THREE SPORTS BUSINESSES

Reinke started the discussion by introducing panelists and asking them to talk about their respective industries and companies.

The Rams relocated to Los Angeles in 2016 and established its base of operations in Thousand Oaks. It was a very trying time, said Warwick. The team is settled now – for the most part – and has approximately 122 employees who work out of its business office in Agoura Hills and a 53,000-square-foot temporary practice facility at California Lutheran University.

The organization is also anxiously awaiting completion of the new state-of-the-art Los Angeles Stadium and Entertainment District at Hollywood Park in Inglewood. Slated to open in 2020, the stadium and larger mixed-use development will be home to the Rams and the Los Angeles Chargers.

“There’s a lot ahead of us,” said Warwick. “It’s exciting for Los Angeles.”

The Sports Academy in Thousand Oakes, founded by Faulkner, is a 96,200-square-foot facility that offers programs and training for a multitude of sports and physical fitness activities. It also offers sport-related recovery, fitness, corporate and medical services.

Prior to opening the business, Faulkner spoke with a lot of people in the area who shared his vision for creating a facility like Sports Academy.

The idea is to pair professional coaches and trainers with youths and adult athletes in one consolidated location. It reduces commute times to participate in activities that help them grow in their sports.

“We were able to put together the resources and make it happen,” said Faulkner, who self-funded the business. The Rams also use the facility and its services.

Somebody recently asked him how business was going. Faulkner’s response: “It’s going fantastic! The business, in my mind, should have grown a little faster, because I know what we have, and I know the work we do for families. But the reality is there’s way more opportunity than I thought to compete and do well in a number of different areas around performance lifestyle.”

While introducing Jelinek, Reinke ribbed him a bit for showing up to the forum with bruises and stitches on his face. He explained that while Jelinek was recently playing a game of pickleball in Newbury Park, a wayward remote-control airplane with a four-foot wing span slammed into the side of his face.

“It’s not funny, because it certainly could have blinded him,” said Reinke, adding playfully “so he gets the award for the most dedicated and persevering to show up tonight.”

“You can’t make these things up,” said Jelinek jokingly.

Easton is one of the leading manufacturers of baseball and softball equipment, including bats, ball gloves, apparel, bags, batting gloves, helmets, catcher’s equipment and related accessories.

The sporting goods industry was originally structured for manufacturers, such as Easton, to sell products directly to retail partners, said Jelinek, but the business model is changing and manufacturers are now developing relationships directly with consumers.

“For us to grow as a brand, we’re trying to revolutionize how we service these consumers,” said Jelinek. “Families want to interact with you as a brand.” They want customized products shipped directly to their house and service to be part of the purchase experience, he added.

MAKING SPORTS ACCESSIBLE

Reinke commented on how it’s often cost prohibitive for families to get involved in sports. He asked panelists how they’re approaching this issue in their respective businesses.

“The uniqueness about Los Angeles is it demands a premium product,” said Warwick, as it relates to the spectator side of the business. “That’s the one thing we don’t think will be an issue in selling the new stadium.”

“But to your point, you don’t want to price out the people who take their kids to a game, because you want them in that environment and you’re trying to generate the next generation of fans.”

The new stadium in Inglewood, where the Rams will eventually play home games, will offer multiple price points in and around the building, he said.

“The Aspen Institute came out with a study in 2016 that said the number one barrier for kids to participate in sports is economics,” said Faulkner. “That’s one area I think about and it’s one of our challenges.”

So, the for-profit Sports Academy launched its registered 501(c)3 non-profit SA Foundation to expand access to individuals and groups who might otherwise be priced out of programs at the facility. It’s working with a variety of partners and organizations to expand access.

As the company expands into new markets, it plans to open facilities in close cooperation with locals who know the needs of the area, said Faulkner.

“Going and jumping into a community...
Of which you don’t know people, in a business like this, is a treacherous landscape to walk through. We want to do it and do it wisely with locals who are invested in their communities.”

Thinking about scalable growth, a lot of it comes from developing and offering digital products such as online training, said Faulkner. One niche the company is working on is offering scientifically-based digital products that can help people with cognitive development. The exercises can be delivered through customer’s mobile phones.

“We’ve got a real leading-edge opportunity that we’re working on,” said Faulkner about the company’s digital product development. “It’s a big area of growth.”

DEMAND FOR CUSTOMIZATION

In a business climate where consumers expect a high level of customization in products and services, Reinke asked panelists how they’re meeting this demand.

“Families want to interact with you as a brand. They want customized products shipped directly to their house and service to be part of the purchase experience.’”

DAN JELINEK
Easton Diamond Sports

In the Sports Academy building, customers can get blood drawn, labs done and come back and have a doctor show them deficiencies in areas such as nutrition. Then the facility will create custom-designed pods – similar to a Keurig coffee pods – that can be placed in a

Continued from page 21

Before we talk space, we talk business.

Thinking strategically, acting objectively. We think of real estate as a business tool.
Clarifying and resolving complex issues is what we do. How we do it is what sets us apart from other CPA firms. We deliver value and solutions that help our clients achieve their goals.

Connect with us at: www.hcvt.com or 805.374.8555
Ruth had a certain way of doing things, like preparing the best prime steak of your life and serving it on a 500° sizzling plate.

Come in tonight and experience Ruth's timeless recipe for yourself.
First We Are Farmers... Then We Are Hunters™

ATTENTION BUSINESS OWNERS

Your Company Today
- Do You Know What Your Business is Worth?
- Is Your Company Aligned with Buyer Preferences?
- What is Your Next Best Step? Building... Selling...?

Your Company Tomorrow
- What Are You Doing to Maximize Tomorrow’s Value?
- What Is Your Best Build Opportunity to Increase Value?
- What Will Your Company be Worth in Three Years?

Your Future Wealth
- Are You Familiar with your Liquidity Event Options?
- What Is the Optimal Timing of a Liquidity Event?
- What is the Optimal Form of a Liquidity Event?

We Are a Unique Resource
- We Will Assess Your Company’s Alignment with Buyer Preferences so You are Not “Working Hard and Flying Blind”
- We Will Recommend the Best Way(s) to Build Your Company to Increase its Value so You are Not Guessing
- We Will Execute Any Capital Raise or Any Acquisition Transaction to Enhance Your Company’s Growth and Value
- We Will Determine the Optimal Timing and Form of a Liquidity Event to Maximize Your Welfare
- We Will Execute a Liquidity Event Transaction in a Manner to Achieve the Best Outcome Based on Special Practices

We Produce Exceptional Results... We Are Ready to Help You... Learn More

818-713-8000

FINRA Registered & SIPC Member