

# DESIGNING THE GAME

THE ROLE OF GRAPHIC DESIGN IN SPORTS



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# INTRODUCTION

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Graphic design plays a major role in the world of professional sports. From team logos and jerseys to social media posts and stadium visuals, designers shape how fans experience and connect with their favourite teams (Mondragon, 2024). Graphic design in sports is not only about aesthetics but also about storytelling, identity, and creating emotional connections.

The design field in sports continues to grow as digital and social media becomes more important in sports

marketing. Teams rely heavily on visual content to engage audiences, promote games, and build strong brand identities across multiple platforms.

I chose this career path because it combines two of my biggest passions: creativity and sports. My goal is to work as a graphic designer in professional sports, specifically with the Toronto Blue Jays, while continuing to grow as an artist and develop my own creative style

## PROFESSION OVERVIEW

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Graphic designers in the sports industry are responsible for creating visual content that represents the team's identity and engages its audience. Their work appears across many platforms, including social media, merchandise, advertisements, and stadium displays (ZipRecruiter, n.d.).

Typical responsibilities for designers include designing game-day graphics, editing photos of athletes, creating promotional materials, and maintaining a consistent brand

identity. Designers often work closely with marketing teams, photographers, and media staff to produce content quickly, especially during live events and game days.

The role requires both creativity and efficiency. Designers must be able to produce high-quality visuals under tight deadlines while adapting to trends and team branding guidelines. This makes sports design an exciting and fast-paced career.

# TRENDS & CURRENT ISSUES

The sports design industry is always evolving, especially with the rise of digital media. One major trend is the increased use of motion graphics and animation, particularly for social media. Short videos, animated score updates, and dynamic visuals are essential for engaging fans online.

Another trend is the shift toward bold, modern, and simplified branding. Many teams are updating their visual identities to appeal to younger audiences while still respecting their history and traditions.

However, some challenges are industry-specific. Designers often work under pressure with tight deadlines, which can lead to creative burnout. There is also ongoing discussion about diversity and representation in sports media, as well as the need for more inclusive perspectives in design (Popovic, 2024).

Looking ahead, the future of sports design will likely involve more interactive and immersive content, including augmented reality and personalized fan experiences (West, 2025).



## INFORMATION RESOURCES

There are many valuable resources available regarding graphic design in sports. Online platforms like Behance and Dribbble allow designers to showcase their work and explore current industry trends. These platforms are very useful for building a portfolio and gaining inspiration (Moore, 2019).

Social media also plays a major role in this field. Many professional sports teams share on platforms like Instagram and X, providing insight into real-world projects and creative processes.

In addition, professional organizations and design committees offer networking opportunities, industry news, and guidance. Staying connected to these resources is essential for keeping up with trends and improving skills.

The Toronto Blue Jays offer Rising Professionals & Summer Associates Programs for students, recent graduates and early-career professionals. They are a way to gain hands-on experience in the industry while working with industry professionals (Toronto Blue Jays, 2026)

# INFLUENTIAL VOICES

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The sports design industry is shaped by a range of creative professionals, including in-house team designers, creative directors, and freelance artists. These individuals influence how teams present themselves visually and how fans interact with sports content.

Many designers gain recognition through social media, where they share their work and build personal

brands. This has made the industry more accessible, allowing emerging designers to showcase their skills and connect with professionals.

However, there is still a need for more diverse voices in sports design. Increasing representation from different backgrounds can lead to more innovative and inclusive visual storytelling (Nikhil, 2018).

# PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

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A career in sports graphic design requires a combination of technical and soft skills, as well as education in graphic design.

Technical skills include proficiency in design software such as Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, and InDesign. Knowledge of typography, colour theory, and branding is also essential.

Soft skills are equally important. Designers must be able to communicate effectively, collaborate with team members, and manage their time efficiently. The ability to work under pressure and adapt quickly is especially important for producing real-time designs. (ZipRecruiter, n.d.)



# CAREER PATHWAYS

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There are several pathways into a career in sports graphic design. Many designers begin by studying graphic design and building a portfolio of work. Internships with sports teams, media companies, or design agencies provide valuable real-world experience and industry connections.

Entry-level positions may include junior designer roles or freelance opportunities. Over-time, designers can advance to more senior positions, such as lead designer or

creative director, where they guide a team and oversee larger projects.

Freelancing is also a common path in this field, allowing designers to work with multiple teams or brands. Regardless of the path taken, building a strong portfolio, building industry connections, and gaining experience are keys to success in the sports graphic design industry.



## CONCLUSION

Graphic design in professional sports is a dynamic and exciting career that combines creativity, storytelling, and teamwork. Designers play a crucial role in shaping “brand identity, engaging fans, and marketing the sports experience” (Mondragon, 2024).

This career aligns closely with my interests and goals, as it allows me

to combine my passion for art with my love of sports. Working with a professional team, like the Toronto Blue Jays, would give me the opportunity to create impactful designs that reach a wide audience.

As the industry continues to evolve, I am excited to develop my skills, explore new creative techniques, and contribute to the future of sports design.

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