



THE SPORTS INTERN INDUSTRY INSIDER

DR. DONALD KALKSTEIN

DIRECTOR, MENTAL PERFORMANCE AND WELLNESS
DALLAS MAVERICKS

Dr. Donald Kalkstein serves as the **Director of Mental Performance and Wellness for the Dallas Mavericks (NBA)**, a role he considers his dream job. With decades of experience across MLB, the NBA, golf, soccer, and collegiate athletics, he's built a career around unlocking peak performance through mental skills.

His favorite part of the job is helping athletes “quiet the noise, find clarity, and unlock the mindset that allows them to thrive under pressure.” But trust doesn't come easy in elite sports. He recalls advice from a veteran coach that shaped his philosophy: “You can't coach what you don't understand, and you can't understand what you won't sit with.” For Dr. Kalkstein, it's about presence before performance – listening deeply, earning trust, and knowing that progress isn't always linear.

In addition to his work with the Mavericks, he consults with the LPGA, Dallas Trinity FC, and serves as Director of Mental Performance Training at Southern Methodist University.

EDUCATION & CREDENTIALS

Ph.D. in Sport Performance and Leadership - Concordia University
C.A.S. in Athletic Counseling - Springfield College
Psychology, B.A. - Southern Illinois University
Licensed Professional Counselor & Certified Mental Performance Coach

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:



DR. KALKSTEIN'S ADVICE

- **The sports industry is built on relationships**, not résumés. Titles and degrees open doors, but it's your character, consistency, and ability to be part of a team that keeps you in the room.
- **Internships aren't about proving how much you know** – they're about showing how well you can learn, contribute, and adapt.
- No task is too small if it builds trust. Be curious, stay humble, and remember: **how you do the little things is how people will believe you'll handle the big ones.**