



Athlete sees potential in Sport Clips

By Jennifer Wang

Running a business isn't exactly the same as running a defensive play, but for 30-year-old Kevin Lewis (l), linebacker for the New York Giants from 2000 to 2006, the transition was a smooth one.

Last February, Lewis opened two Sport Clips franchises in Greenville, South Carolina, and within the year, his stores had attracted more than 7,000 new clients—or nearly 10 percent of the target market in the stores' retail trade area. He plans to open a third later this year.

Owning a hair salon for men is a surprising turn of events for Lewis, who put

Opportunities



Sport Clips on the backburner when his franchise consultant named other options, including a gym. "I was like, 'A haircut place? Heck, no,'" he says. "But after getting more information, I wanted to see what it could really do."

Lewis likens the experience to a spa for men, with sports on TV instead of manicures and facials. "We try to bring the feel of a bunch of guys sitting around, watching and talking about sports while getting a haircut," he says. "It's a break, and guys hang out after they get their cuts."

As a first-time business owner, Lewis feels he still has a lot to learn. Fortunately, being part of a franchise system

gives him access to a community of experts who can offer advice. And because business in his region is still largely driven by word-of-mouth, he adds that it's good to have support on different marketing strategies.

One thing he has discovered is that his sports credentials are a selling point. "It was actually my wife's idea to put up posters of me in the stores—I was just thinking of getting friends' stuff and having them sign it," he says, laughing. But having played college football for Duke University, his fame doesn't always land him on the popular side of a sports rivalry. "I'm in Clemson Country. I get grief."

563: the number of Sport Clips locations as of July 2008—an increase of 123 over the previous year

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