Alex Israel came to VCU on a tennis scholarship in 2006 and earned a Bachelor’s degree in Marketing and an M.B.A.

Four years later, his profession brings together marketing and tennis. Israel is East Coast Field Marketing Specialist for Babolat, the legendary tennis equipment and apparel manufacturer used by Rafael Nadal, Andy Roddick, Jo-Wilfried Tsonga and other top players.

Israel started with Babolat in October, making him one of the company’s newest managers. Among his first duties is helping the brand implement a major retail transition.

“Babolat's old retail strategy focused exclusively on pro shops,” he explains. “The new strategy brings in a different channel. Customers will find pre-strung Babolat racquets and other basic equipment in larger retailers like Dick’s Sporting Goods and Sports Authority and transition to boutiques for specialty equipment.” Israel is tasked with training staff and overseeing merchandise and strategy in the new large retailers, while also maintaining Babolat’s strong relationship with pro shops.

He will also represent Babolat at major tennis events including the Masters in Miami and the US Open in New York. “I work largely with retailers, but at tournaments, I’ll run the Babolat booth and represent the brand with players and spectators – I suppose a little bit like the Verizon Speaker Series work,” he adds.

Israel’s job with Babolat is the result of efforts that he began two years ago. Utilizing contacts he had cultivated as a tennis player, he contacted Babolat’s marketing director to express interest in working for the company after graduation. “They had nothing at the time, but when there was an opening later they remembered me and called,” he says.

He advises current marketing majors to select five or six companies that interest them and begin working now to add those firms to their networks. He sees marketing’s variety as one of the field’s main strengths. “Marketing is so diverse. There’s promotion, marketing management, market analysis,” he says. “It’s a field where there is enormous opportunity to travel and experience different cultures.”

Israel credits the VCU School of Business with preparing him for success in the field. He cites the mix of strong academics, coupled with real-world applications, as some of the school’s main strengths. “The classes give you a
great general background. They are close to the business world – it’s not only about theory, but also application,” he says. Looking at the school’s evolution since his first arrival, Israel believes that its growth will continue.

“The VCU School of Business has great professors and great people. The school was at a crossroads a few years ago, and it has chosen a good path. I have every reason to believe it will keep moving in that direction.”