

Fernando Mendoza has a job at Newmark if the NFL doesn't work out

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Story Highlights

- Fernando Mendoza interned at Newmark in commercial real estate before becoming the expected first NFL Draft pick.
- "We think he'd do phenomenal in real estate finance," Newmark executive tells the Business Times.
- Mendoza has 220,000 LinkedIn followers and partners with the Microsoft-owned company as Captain Super Connection Bro.

Fernando Mendoza is expected to be the first player selected in the NFL draft, but If things had played out differently, he would be starting his commercial real estate career in San Francisco.

"We think he'd do phenomenal in real estate finance," said [Steve Golubchik](#), executive vice chairman and president of Western Region Capital Markets at [Newmark](#).

Mendoza was not on the NFL radar when he met Golubchik at a careers event for student athletes at UC Berkeley in 2023. Golubchik attended Cal when Aaron Rodgers and Marshawn Lynch were the stars of the football team, and is a volunteer at the Cameron Institute, which prepares Berkeley student athletes for life after graduation through career development, community engagement and mental performance programs.

When Golubchik spoke about commercial real estate internships, he noticed Mendoza paying close attention.

"He was engaged from the moment that he was there, asking questions, diving in, really wanting to understand and absorb the information," Golubchik told the Business Times. "You could really tell a lot about his character pretty quick."

After starting for Cal in the 2023 season and winning the hearts of Bears fans with a heartfelt speech upon beating Stanford in the Big Game, Mendoza interned with Newmark in the

summer of 2024. He combined athletic training in Berkeley with a deep dive into spreadsheets, financial models and the CRE playbook in San Francisco.

“We had them go through a finance boot camp,” Golubchik said. “We really wanted to get them grounded on finance itself, as it relates to commercial real estate. We had presenters come in, we had analysts come in, we had a bunch of tutorials.”

Mendoza took it seriously. The Miami native originally committed to Yale before enrolling at Cal, where he graduated with a degree in business administration from the Haas Business School.

“He's got an unbelievable EQ and IQ,” Golubchik said. “He was very quick to grasp the information, but very quick to also understand how to distill it for the people around him.”

Transferrable skills

Newmark is one of a number of Bay Area companies offering internships to Cal athletes, and Golubchik noted their ability to transfer on-field skills to the business environment.

“That's part of the reason we've had great success working with student athletes,” Golubchik said. “In Fernando's position, you could just tell this guy's got phenomenal character traits.”

After finishing the internship, Mendoza transferred to Indiana University in December 2024, where he led the Hoosiers to a record-breaking, unbeaten season and the school's first national championship. After leaving Berkeley he transformed from a promising athlete into a generational one, noted by football analysts for his poise under pressure, elite passing accuracy and mental processing.

“You could tell that he had leadership traits,” Golubchik said. “A lot of the other players that were in the internship looked up to him. He helped make sure everyone was reviewing what was being discussed and on task, and he was also the one that was confident enough to raise his hand and push back and engage in dialogue.”

He also knows how to network like a CRE star. When Mendoza declared for the 2026 NFL draft in February, where he is expected to be selected first by the Las Vegas [Raiders](#), he changed his LinkedIn status to “Open to Work” and an accompanying post went viral. His LinkedIn page — which still lists his Bay Area CRE internships at Newmark as well as Pleasanton-based Acre Investment Co. — is his main social-media presence, and he now has a partnership with the Microsoft-owned company.

“What stands out about Fernando is just how intentional his approach is,” LinkedIn Chief Brand Officer Heather Freeland told the Business Times. “He's been very candid that there

was a point where he didn't know if football would ultimately be the long-term path for him. Because of that, he didn't wait until the end of his career to start thinking about what comes next — he got a head start.”

Since 2021, LinkedIn has seen a 30% increase in the number of U.S.-based athletes using the platform, Freeland said. Global stars like former tennis ace Rafael Nadal are active on the platform promoting various companies and investments, while seven-time NFL champion Tom Brady has 143,000 followers. Formula 1 driver Lewis Hamilton has 645,000 LinkedIn followers.

Mendoza has appeared in ads promoting LinkedIn with comedian Guillermo Rodriguez, adopting the persona of a professional networking superhero, Captain Super Connection Bro. He has 220,000 LinkedIn followers and is part of a new generation of athletes using the platform to build their brand.

“Fernando represents a broader shift toward athletes building their professional identity earlier in their careers. For us, this partnership is about recognizing and supporting that, and elevating a voice that's already using the platform with real intention,” Freeland said.

Mendoza will face a lot of scrutiny as the No. 1 overall pick, but if he ever wants to get out of the spotlight, he won't need to use LinkedIn. There is a job in San Francisco commercial real estate waiting for him.

"Newmark is an open platform to him, to the extent that he ever wanted to come back and sink his teeth into it," Golubchik said.