I stuck with it—and that’s what makes me most proud.

It was midnight, and Madden’s 24-foot Ryder truck was barreling down a dark desert road in New Mexico. The bags under his eyes were purple from sleep deprivation. Vero Beach, Fla.—aka Dodgertown—was two days behind him and Phoenix was a day’s journey ahead. Madden hadn’t rested much those past two days. Or, really, those past 10 months. It was 2006 and Madden’s third baseball internship had him working most days from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.

He was playing the role of business manager for the Dodgers’ rookie ball team. Duties included being roused at 4 a.m. by his boss—whose position Madden now holds—and told to drive a recently promoted player from Vero Beach to Orlando airport, an hour and a half away. His tasks also involved carting a truckload of baseball equipment across the country so that the minor league managers could easily pick it up.

It was the director of the Pirates’ spring training facility, Pirate City, in Florida. He wanted to know if Madden would pass up the groundskeeping opportunity—there was an opening in Pirate City’s front office.

Madden was plunged into some of the best months of his life. He stayed with the Pirates all fall, then on through spring. They hired him back again in summer of 2005 as a baseball operations intern in their Pittsburgh main office. Madden worked within a few paces of the GM, talked to Pirates’ scouts and farm-league directors, and watched every home game from the general managers’ suite. Madden felt like here, in Pittsburgh’s baseball operations division, which includes player development, was exactly where he wanted to be.

“The only mistake I made,” Madden said, “was thinking I was there to last.”

Madden punched the phone dial for the umpteenth time. “Hi, my name’s Chris Madden. Would you be interested in purchasing program notes for the Dodgers’ spring training magazine?”

Click.

It was the beginning of Madden’s 2005-06 Dodgers internship. His nights in the Pirates’ general managers’ suite were over and his cross-country adventures as instructional league business manager were 10 months away. All Madden could think of was the Dodgers’ instructional league business manager position open in California.

Madden followed his gut—and spent all spring applying for fall internships with MLB. Then all summer. Nothing came through.

With no time to spare, he decided to apply for a fall internship mowing the Pittsburgh Pirates’ baseball fields as a member of their grounds crew.

Then, Madden got a call.

Madden knew of a job opportunity in Boston, his hometown. It was salaried, permanent and had regular hours: He’d be selling advertising space for a radio station. It wasn’t baseball, but at least the station covered Red Sox games. He decided to send in a resume.

But first, he called Dean Montague.

For two years after quitting Temple football as a freshman, Madden sat in front of his dorm room TV and watched his old team play.

“I would say to myself, ‘yeah—I was there.’ But I couldn’t think of anything proud to say about it,” Madden said.

Ever since then, Madden has had an intense fear of giving up. He couldn’t live with himself if he ever threw in the towel again. Dean Montague knew this. So whenever Madden veered close to quitting, Montague talked him off the ledge.

Montague picked up Madden’s call and heard out his case—for about two minutes.

“You’re jumping ship? Come on! If you hadn’t followed your gut, you’d be up in Vermont with the Expos!”

Madden parked his Ryder truck in Dodgertown, leaving a country’s worth of pavement behind him. He cut the ignition. The internship was over. He shook hands with his boss—then asked what he could do next.

There was a PR associate position open in Dodgers’ headquarters. Madden knew little about PR—would he be up running endless copies of game notes for the press? It wasn’t baseball operations. But when he applied for what became his dream internship with the Pirates, he thought he’d be spending his fall mowing outfield.

His gut said to do it.

Within 14 months of moving out to LA, Madden got a call.