

Sports



Associated Press

Clients Russell Maryland and Eric Turner share a laugh with Leigh Steinberg during the 1991 draft.

He's Mastered the Art of the Deal

Agent: Hamilton High's Leigh Steinberg has earned a reputation for not only negotiating megabuck deals, but for requiring his clients to give back to their communities.

WEST LOS ANGELES

By SEAN WATERS
TIMES STAFF WRITER

After Cornell Lake was named an All-American linebacker at UCLA in 1988, he needed an agent to represent him for the NFL draft.

Lake, a former Culver City High player, was contacted by more than 200 agents and narrowed his list to 10.

After interviewing three of the candidates, Lake thought he had made the right decision.

Until he read the newspaper the next day.

Lloyd Bloom, the agent Lake spoke with, and his partner Norby Walters had been indicted on charges of racketeering, conspiracy and mail fraud. In short, Bloom and Walters were accused of persuading college athletes to sign as clients before their eligibility expired—a violation of the NCAA rules. Their conviction later was overturned by a federal appeals court.

"It's really hard to get a fix on people even when they have big-name players as clients," Lake said. "They still might be shady people."

Lake, who was taken in the second round by the Pittsburgh Steelers, signed with sports attorney Leigh Steinberg.

"Leigh brought over a ton of articles about himself and his clients," Lake said. "He spoke about values and helping out your community by donating to charities. Other agents talked about it too but it was really lip service. They had no concrete evidence to back it up."

For the past 17 years, Steinberg, who grew up in West Los Angeles and attended Hamilton High, has convinced some of the NFL's top draft picks that there is more to life than signing a multi-year megabuck contract. He represents more than 60 football players, including 1992 first-round picks Desmond Howard of Michigan, David Klingler of Houston and Tommy Maddox of UCLA.

Steinberg, 43, also represents the first player selected in three drafts: Dallas quarterback Troy Aikman in 1989, Indianapolis quarterback Jeff George in 1990 and Dallas defensive lineman Russell Maryland in 1991.

Steinberg has negotiated more than \$200 million in contracts. The most lucrative was a \$42-million personal services contract given to Steve Young by the Los Angeles Express of the defunct United States Football League in 1984.

He also requires his clients to donate a portion of their earnings to local charities in their hometown and in communities where they compete. By Steinberg's account, his clients have raised more than \$30 million nationally.

"Athletes have a unique capability to serve as role models, to retrace their roots and to give back something they have received," Steinberg said. "By setting up programs and scholarship funds, the athletes make a contribution to their community that helps improve the quality of life. In turn, those people that benefit from the funds hopefully will give back money when they become financially secure."

Steinberg, who lives in Newport Beach with his wife and two sons, will be honored at a charity dinner tonight at the Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel. He will receive the Champion of Liberty Award by the Pacific Southwest Region of the Anti-Defamation League Sports Division.

Steinberg became affiliated with the ADL through his father, Dr. Warren Steinberg, a former principal at Fairfax High and a past president of the Los Angeles Human Relations Commission. He spent the better part of his life growing up in a moderate-size house in Rancho Park.

A sign posted on the front door read: "We

welcome neighbors of any race, religion or nationality."

Steinberg was a class president at Hamilton and attended UCLA as a freshman. A social activist and a Vietnam protester, Steinberg transferred to UC Berkeley to continue work on his undergraduate degree. A bystander during the student revolt at People's Park, Steinberg was later elected student body president by advocating nonviolence as a political platform.

Steinberg was a dorm counselor at Cal in 1975 when he met his first client, quarterback Steve Bartkowski. Unhappy with his agent, Bartkowski asked Steinberg, who had recently graduated from Boalt law school, to represent him.

Steinberg accepted Bartkowski's offer and negotiated a four-year, \$650,000 deal for the quarterback. At the time it was the largest contract ever given to an NFL rookie.

Utilizing his Hamilton High connection, Steinberg signed his next client, former Yankee Warren Moon, who was a quarterback at Washington. The two met during the Challenge Bowl, an all-star game for the best seniors of the Pacific 10 and Big Ten conferences.

Moon was drawn to Steinberg because he talked more about a player's well-being and not the amount and length of his future contract.

"So many players leave football with nothing," Moon said. "Leigh talked about setting me up for after football before my pro career started. He taught me how to build relationships with other people and how to make business contacts and get involved in charities in the community."

Steinberg, however, has not been a patsy at the negotiation tables.

Shortly after signing Young to a record contract, Steinberg negotiated a five-year, \$5.5-million deal for Moon with the Houston Oilers.

Steinberg also set up a scholarship fund on Moon's behalf at Hamilton and West L.A. College. Hamilton assistant principal Elizabeth Metzelaar said Moon has contributed a \$250 scholarship to students for the past 15 years. Steinberg also established a scholarship of \$1,000 in 1990. Steinberg's father has contributed a \$200 scholarship annually.

"There are probably less than 10 scholarships given at Hamilton from the group of people who attended here," Metzelaar said.

Lake has contributed a \$2,000 scholarship to Culver City High, which is the largest award given to the school, according to scholarship treasurer Tom Supple.

Lake, who lives in Culver City, also raises money for the Children's Rehabilitation Institute in Pittsburgh.

Aikman has established a \$75,000 endowment at UCLA.

Although the business of representing players has become increasingly competitive, Steinberg does not have to lobby players for his services. He accepted offers from only six football players. He received phone calls from 65 prospects.

"I have a special relationship with my players," he said. "I enjoy the fun and excitement of growing up together with them," he said. "Moon and I have been together for 15 years and I have been in his wedding and he has been in mine. I am also the godfather for several of my players' children."

Moon said jokingly that Steinberg isn't the perfect angel that newspapers portray him to be.

"[Steinberg] is not the neatest tobacco chewer in the world," Moon said. "He sends me contacts with dried tobacco juice on it. Once you get by the tobacco juice, you can finally read the details of the contract."

It's one of the few spots on Steinberg's record as a sports attorney.

NOTEBOOK / SEAN WATERS

Bruins' Janicki Is Feeling Like an Angel After Baseball Draft

Pitcher Pete Janicki of UCLA was the first player from the Westside to be selected in baseball's amateur draft Monday.

Janicki was a first-round selection by the California Angels and was the eighth player selected overall.

Other area players who were first-round selections included Pepperdine pitcher Derek Wallace, who was selected by the Chicago Cubs with the 11th pick, and former Culver City High outfielder Todd Stevenson, who was picked by the Toronto Blue Jays with the 25th pick. Stevenson played at Arizona State.

Michael Moore, a former Beverly Hills High and UCLA center fielder, was chosen by the Dodgers with the 38th pick. The Dodgers also selected first baseman Dan Melendez of Pepperdine with the 49th pick.

Former Crossroads High standout Steve Solomon of Stanford was selected in the seventh round by the Philadelphia Phillies.

Janicki, a junior right-hander, was the Pacific 10 Conference pitcher of the year. He was 9-4 with a 3.53 earned-run average and 150 strikeouts and 150 1/3 innings.

Wallace was 3-2 with a 3.55 ERA and 56 strikeouts in 58 1/3 innings. Wallace was the winning pitcher in the Waves' 7-0 victory over Texas in the College World Series Monday.

Moore was projected to be a first-round pick until he injured his right shoulder while diving for a ball against California April 10. Moore missed 25 games, including the Southeast Regionals, where the Bruins lost to Oklahoma, 10-0, in the regional championship game.

Melendez, a former St. Bernard High player, has a .352 batting average with 10 home runs and 39 runs batted in entering this week's

College World Series games.

Solomon, who was an All-Pacific 10 first-team selection, batted .357 with 10 home runs, 47 RBIs and seven stolen bases. He led the Cardinal with six assists and made only one error.

Solomon's older brother, Michael, played one season in the Seattle Mariners organization.

College track: UCLA's Tony Miller, John Godina, Marty Beck and Dawn Dumble qualified in two events for the NCAA Division I Track and Field Championships this week at Austin, Tex.

Miller, a junior sprinter, qualified by running the 100 meters in 10.18 seconds and the 200 in 20.51. Godina, a redshirt freshman, had a season-best toss of 64 feet 6 3/4 inches in the shotput and 201-10 in the discus. Dumble had season-bests of 56-6 in the shotput and 186-8 in the discus.

Beck, who has been slowed because of shin and calf injuries, qualified by running the 400 hurdles in 49.90. Other men's qualifiers were Charles Rogers in the triple jump (53.9 wind-aided), David Bunevacz in the javelin (246-10, school record) and Erik Smith in the javelin (237-2).

Beck, Mike Stevenson, Michael Williams and Derrick Baker will form the 1,600 relay team.

Other women qualifiers were Roshanda Glenn in the triple jump (43-5) and Jennifer Whelchel in shotput (49-9).

City Section track: Robin Snowbeck of University will be among the top runners competing in the State meet beginning Friday at Cerritos College.

Snowbeck, who will attend Wisconsin in the fall, ran 5:14.72 to win the 1,600 in the City Section

championships last week at Birmingham High. She also qualified in the 800 by running 2:16.24 to place second.

The top four finishers in each event at the City meet qualified for State.

Myron Bernard (Venice) won the boys' 800 in 1:56.22 and Chris Hunt (Westchester) won the 300 hurdles in 38.75.

David Shumsky (Palisades) placed second in the high jump (6-8) and David Thomas (Westchester) took fourth (6-2). Matt Gruner (Fairfax) ran 9:43.42 to take second in the 3,200.

Tammie Hunter (University) won the triple jump with a leap of 36-6 3/4.

In other girls' events, Shondell Beaton (Hamilton) finished fourth in the 400 (59.22), Katerina Kerchis (Venice) was third in the 1,600 (5:23.53), Darlene Walker (Hollywood) finished second in the shotput (35-8) and Chita Obasi (Hamilton) was third in the 100 hurdles (15.46).

The University 1,600 relay team ran a 4:01.98 to finish fourth.

Southern Section track: Jesse Stern of Harvard-Westlake and Glory Dolphin of Santa Monica were among State qualifiers from area Southern Section schools.

Stern went 14-1 to win the pole vault in the Masters Meet Friday at Cerritos College.

Dolphin placed fifth in the long jump. She qualified with her last leap of 37 feet 0 3/4 inches.

The St. Bernard 1,600 relay team, featuring sprinter Kamara Mayberry, finished fifth in 3:56.75 to qualify for State.

The top five finishers at the Masters Meet qualified for State.

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