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Shadow People

Meet nine mighty forces who stand behind the men and women in the spotlight and help them succeed

From *ESPN the Magazine*

DEALMAKER

Bob LaMonte

"Before we got involved, coaches were making \$300,000," says LaMonte. "Now they're making \$3 million." But the agent doesn't just fill his coaching clients' coffers. He also brokers deals that give them the kind of control most coaches just dream about. The 62-year-old agent's roster boasts Charlie Weis and an army of A-list NFL coordinators (Mike Martz, Mike Singletary, Jim Mora Jr., and Mike Sherman among them). But it is head guys such as Mike Holmgren, John Gruden, Andy Reid, Brad Childress, John Fox, and Mike Nolan who make LaMonte one of the league's most influential insiders. The contracts he brokered for Holmgren in Seattle, Reid in Philadelphia, and Sherman during his run with the Packers set a new gold standard, combining multimillion dollar compensation with unprecedented front-office control.

Mark of influence: For the 2007 season, LaMonte's head-coaching clients will rake in somewhere north of \$36 million in contract money.

ARCHITECT

Janet Marie Smith

As the senior vice-president of development and planning for the Red Sox, Smith is in charge of Fenway Park's renovations. Over the past five years, she has overseen vast improvements in the fan experience at one of baseball's oldest and most overcrowded parks. With expanded concourses, less congestion, and additional seats perched above the Green Monster, Fenway has retained its 95-year-old charm while adapting to modern demands for more space and amenities. It's the same approach that Smith used with Atlanta's Turner Field and before that, Baltimore's Camden Yards, two retro parks that proved a fan-friendly stadium can enliven a city's dormant urban center.

Mark of influence: Since Camden Yards opened in 1992, a dozen throwback ballparks have helped revitalize urban areas.

MONEY MAN

Steve Greenberg

The son of Hall of Famer Hank Greenberg lasted a few years in the minors after graduating from Yale in 1970. He later became a player agent, negotiating baseball's first-ever weight-related incentive clause for Bill Madlock in 1981. From 1990 to 1993, Greenberg rose to prominence as the deputy commissioner of Major League Baseball and the right hand man to then-commissioner Fay Vincent. These days, as part of the New York City investment firm Allen & Co., the 59-year-old is who major league owners call when they need advice on selling a franchise. He recently brokered the sales of the Braves, Brewers, and Reds and helped the Mets negotiate naming rights for their new stadium, Citi Field.

Mark of influence: In 1995, Greenberg cofounded the Classic Sports Network, which was bought by ESPN and renamed ESPN Classic. Eight years later he founded CSTV, which was sold to CBS in 2006.

MAESTRO OF METAL

Wade Liles

In the days leading up to a PGA Tour event, you'll find Liles camped out nearby in his spartan TaylorMade equipment trailer quietly tweaking and building drivers for TaylorMade's 80 touring pros, including John Daly, Sergio Garcia, Scott Verplank, and Justin Rose. Millions of dollars in prize money ride on each pro's comfort with his club, so Liles is in heavy demand. He balances a club's weight distribution with individual preference (he stores each pro's likes and dislikes in a laptop) and can construct an entirely new driver in less than 10 minutes. His handiwork helped power Garcia and Verplank to top-five finishes at last month's Tour championship.

Mark of influence: Eschewing their own sponsor technicians, non-TaylorMade pros have been known to sneak by Liles' trailer in search of a club tune-up.

FIX-IT MAN

Dennis Poppe

When Bob Stoops is angry about a blown call or upset about a bowl assignment, he doesn't call Myles Brand. He calls Poppe, the NCAA's managing director for football and baseball. The three-decade NCAA vet oversees both officiating and championship series for football and baseball, and he makes it his business to know every college head coach, AD and assistant equipment manager in the country. He knows how to glad-hand the pols, too. The 59-year-old Poppe has overseen the College World Series since its days in obscurity. Now that it has gone prime time, he's been in talks with the city of Omaha to build the popular event fancy new digs.

Mark of influence: For better or worse, Poppe helped bring both the BCS and instant replay to college football.

VISIONARY

Warren LeGarie

When an NBA franchise is looking for a new coach or general manager (or both) you're likely to see LeGarie's name pop up. The guy reps almost a dozen A-list coaches and front office personnel (like the Nuggets' George Karl and Grizzlies general manager Chris Wallace). He was also one of the first agents to land lucrative European deals for fringe-NBA talents in the 1990s. But his crowning achievement is founding the four-year-old Las Vegas Summer League, a two-week event to which nearly every NBA team ships its best young players. And where the talent goes, the suits follow. Every general manager, coach, and scout spends time in Vegas during

the summer now. And those trolling for jobs might find an agent.

Mark of influence: The LVSL is so successful that, this year, the NBA became an investor.

TOP COP

David Hoots

As a kid in Winston-Salem, N.C., Hoots worked at the local racetrack. These days, as NASCAR's managing event director, he is the undisputed lord of all on America's race days. His day begins a couple of hours before the green flag, when he gathers every driver and crew chief for a pre-race meeting and lays down the ground rules for the day (issues such as cautions and pit road speeds are different at every track). Then Hoots, 52, heads up to the race control box. Armed with two walkie-talkies, he monitors nearly every facet of a NASCAR event: ordering caution flags and black flags, assessing pit road penalties, and, when necessary, reviewing instant replay to settle disputes. Even before engines start running, Hoots' word is law.

Mark of influence: "Hoots runs everything that happens until we go home," says Jeff Gordon. "And he must have 10 sets of eyes, because he doesn't miss a thing."

AGITATOR

Justin Wolfers

The burgeoning field of sports economics is revealing the dark side of sports. Just ask Justin Wolfers, the University of Pennsylvania economist and provocateur. Before getting his PhD from Harvard in 2001, the 34-year-old prof worked as a bookie's runner in his native Australia. Now he's teaching a class in Behavioral Economics and Prediction and Sports Betting Markets at Penn and ruffling plenty of feathers with two recent studies. The first, from 2006, used statistical patterns to purportedly uncover point shaving in Division 1 hoops. The second, published in June, claimed racial bias by NBA refs.

Mark of influence: When The New York Times profiled Wolfers' study on NBA refs, David Stern trashed it as "a bum rap." Several prominent economists came to Wolfers' defense.

DREAM MAKER

Steve Clarkson

Joe Montana entrusts both of his high school age sons to Clarkson's tutelage. So did Jim Clausen, father to three Division 1 quarterbacks, who has called Clarkson "a dream maker." The 45-year-old Clarkson learned the QB trade while starting for Jack Elway at San Jose State in the 1980s. After a brief CFL stint, the Los Angeles native returned home to tutor kids on signal-calling basics. Two decades later, he has built himself a who's who roster of clients (Ben Roethlisberger, Matt Leinart, J.P. Losman, John Beck, and, most recently, Jimmy Clausen) each of whom came to him in their teens looking for an edge. This season, four of Clarkson's ex-students will be Division 1 starters, and this summer he tutored 2008's top high school QB prospect, Terrelle Pryor.

Mark of influence: Clarkson commands \$3,000 plus travel expenses for a private talent evaluation, and an additional \$1,000 or more per four-hour session.



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