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In NFL's power circles, LaMonte is representing

January 09, 2011 | Sunday football notes. Greg A. Bedard, Globe Staff

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A list of the most powerful people associated with the NFL would include commissioner **Roger Goodell**, union executive director **DeMaurice Smith**, team owners **Robert Kraft** and **Jerry Jones**, and top player agents **Drew Rosenhaus**, **David Dunn**, **Tom Condon**, and **Ben Dogra**.

But at this time of year — the firing and hiring season — another trumps them all.

Bob LaMonte, a former high school history teacher, could make a strong case for being the most powerful person in the league. Not that he has any interest in doing so.

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"I really pay no attention to it, and I couldn't be more honest about that," LaMonte said. "To me it's meaningless. And I'm not trying to be humble, because I don't think I'm the most humble person in the world.

"But I just believe I was blessed to have that opportunity and if I was the most powerful or wasn't the most powerful, I wouldn't change anything I did. Our motto is: 'We're not a big-time company, we just represent a lot of big-time people.' "

That he does.

In addition to Browns president **Mike Holmgren** (LaMonte's first client 33 years ago), LaMonte represents six current or former general managers: **Mark Dominik** (Buccaneers), **Tom Heckert** (Browns), **Chris Polian** (Colts), **Rick Smith** (Texans), **Rick Spielman** (Vikings), and **Randy Mueller** (Chargers).

He also represents these current and former head coaches: **Brad Childress** (ex-Vikings), **John Fox** (Panthers), **Leslie Frazier** (Vikings), **Josh McDaniels** (ex-Broncos), **Andy Reid** (Eagles), **Mike Sherman** (ex-Packers), **Mike Singletary** (ex-49ers), **Steve Spagnuolo** (Rams), **Mike Martz** (ex-Rams), **Marty Mornhinweg** (ex-Lions), **Mike Nolan** (ex-49ers), **Jim Mora** (ex-Seahawks), **Jon Gruden** (ex-Buccaneers), and **Charlie Weis** (ex-Notre Dame).

Talk about firepower.

And it makes for an interesting postseason.

LaMonte, who runs Professional Sports Representation with his wife, prepares for the craziness during the season by setting up a board with potential openings on one side and the top candidates (some not his clients) on the other.

"We try to see how those things would correspond," LaMonte said. "We have teams with definite change, maybe change, and there's always a surprise. And see how we can best fit

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our people into those changes.”

There was an unprecedented number of surprises this season, as for the first time four coaches were fired before the end of the season. Three were LaMonte clients (Childress, McDaniels, and Singletary) who figured to have some staying power.

LaMonte, 65, doesn't recruit. His business is 100 percent referral. And not everyone gets accepted. LaMonte has specific criteria for clients: ascending assistant coaches or personnel people between the ages of 35 and 45 with the target of being a head coach or general manager in the 45-55 range.

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LaMonte interviews prospects who come to him at the combine each year and puts them through the wringer. Not everyone gets represented, but those who do benefit from LaMonte's year-long tutelage program.

"We're not about getting interviews, we're about getting jobs," LaMonte said. "If you interview one of our guys, you're going to hire them."

Frazier learned that the hard way before asking LaMonte to represent him last offseason.

"He said, 'I've interviewed six times in the last three years and every time I lost to one of your guys. I think it would be better if I worked with you,'" LaMonte said.

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Frazier went from interim to permanent coach of the Vikings last Monday.

"He prepares his candidates with copious notes for their interviews," said former Packers executive **Andrew Brandt**. "Mike Sherman came in with a thick binder outlining his schedule every week for the next 52 weeks. He had potential staff outlined and their biographies. He outlined philosophies and leadership principles."

LaMonte has long been known as an agent who pushes for more and more power for his clients. He freely admits he did so in the past to increase coaches salaries from \$300,000 in 1988 to where the average is now (\$3.75 million).

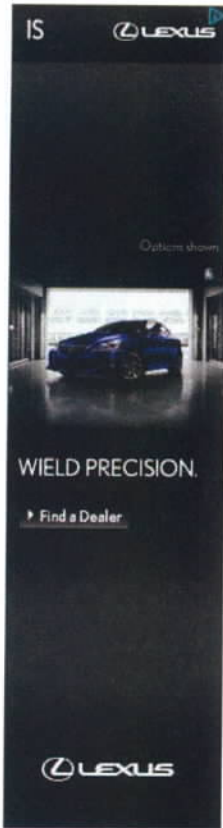
"If I can drive both jobs together, I can start to push salaries into areas never seen before," said LaMonte.

But is it right for his clients? While Reid has been a success also running personnel, Sherman, Childress, and McDaniels all flopped.

LaMonte said the preferred organizational model is a "a strong general manager and a strong head coach that are able to coexist together where the head coach is the voice of the team during the season and the general manager is the voice of the team in the offseason. The best model I ever saw was Mike Holmgren and **Ron Wolf** in Green Bay."

Some wonder if LaMonte isn't pushing his clients on his other clients. Holmgren hired Mora in Seattle, and then Heckert as general manager in Cleveland. Among the targets for the Browns' coaching position are **Pat Shurmur**, Mornhinweg, and Fox — all LaMonte clients. But Cleveland also has interest in **Mike Mularkey** and **Perry Fewell**, who are not represented by LaMonte.

"People say to me all the time, 'You just get people jobs and you just put people everywhere,'



" LaMonte said. "If that was really true, I'd be charging 80 percent, not 3 percent.

"At the end of the day, it's about their talent. I would never call that person. They would call one of my clients first, not me, to tell them they'd like to be interviewed." **SOMETHING FISHY**

Dolphins' floundering is business as usual

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