

Not Your Everyday Sports Agent

JONATHAN MAURER IS BUILDING HIS BUSINESS AND HIS REPUTATION IN A UNIQUE WAY. BY TREATING EVERYBODY FAIRLY AND SPECIAL. AND WITH ONE OF THE BEST PITCHERS IN BASEBALL IN HIS STABLE, IT'S PAYING OFF.

Jonathan Maurer's story should be easy to tell. Successful businessman who had to overcome some pretty large obstacles to finally live his dream; Disney has done this formula a thousand times with sports films. But for the first time in 10 years as a writer, I'm having trouble putting it into words. You see, I've never had the privilege of talking to a nicer guy. Usually it's pretty easy to do some research, conduct an interview and start writing. But this is different. I really want you to understand how good a person Jonathan Maurer is, especially because he's a sports agent. Yes, a sports agent. Please take a moment to allow this information to sink in.

If you're reading this magazine, you're probably aware of the reputation of many sports agents. Let's just say the words "ethical" and "moral" don't spring to mind with all of them. Jonathan Maurer is blowing that perception out of the water.

"We're building our company, but we never want to build too big," he says. "I'll never have aspirations to be the biggest; it's the quality with smaller quantity. I don't want to be the richest, I just want to create opportunities for my family."

Obviously, we're dealing with a different cat here. The *Jerry Maguire* comparison is too gratuitous and not accurate. Remember, Jerry was a self-absorbed money-grubbing maniac

who had an epiphany. Jonathan has been a good guy, extremely grounded and humble from the start.

"I say this a lot; too many people forget who they work for," says Jonathan. "We work for the players. If they don't believe in you, it's not an agency. It all comes back to what the players want. I don't need to be in the headlines."

Are you listening, Drew Rosenhaus?

Maurer has a Master's Degree in Marketing and Management from Wright St. University. He's also a devout Christian, which is what really drives his business.

"We base our company spiritually," says Jonathan. "My faith comes first, then family, then business, in that order. It puts everything in perspective. It gives me comfort I'm doing everything the right way. It's a very cutthroat business, but with that peace I'm able to operate."

It's that faith that's made him a success. Back in 1999, Maurer was at a crossroads. Looking for a job, with a wife and a newborn son, he really wasn't sure which direction his life was heading.

"I was a mess. My wife Sharon put her arms around me and we prayed. That night, Scott Mitchell (who was a pitcher in double A ball at the time) called me up. He could tell I was upset. He said 'If you start something on your own, I'm with you.'"

A few more phone calls came, one from the father of another pitcher, Mike Bacsik.

Maurer borrowed money from his mom to get a plane ticket to Texas, slept at the Bacsiks' house, and prayed he'd get good news.

"The next morning, his dad says we're with you. I wanted to do the whole dance thing. I've never kissed a man, but I almost wanted to. I got to the airport, called my wife and danced some more."

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— SPORTS AGENT,
JONATHAN MAURER

Jonathan and his partner Mike Montana started Millennium Sports Management, which is based in Cincinnati. They decided right from the start they were going to do things the right way.

"We're building a business with integrity, morals and Christian values," says Maurer. "The athletes can be the athletes, play the games they love and let us handle the other



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details. We'll get to know the ballplayers' families, and they'll get to know our families."

That sounds great, but if a business doesn't make money, it's not going to be a business too long. They represented mostly minor league baseball players. Problem is, an agent doesn't see any money unless his client makes more than the major league minimum. For five years, Montana basically kept the business afloat financially while they drained every bank account. They even borrowed money from friends and family. Then in 2004, they finally turned a profit because of their marquis client ... Arizona Diamondbacks ace Brandon Webb.

"After less than a year in the Bigs, we negotiated a multi-million dollar deal for Brandon," says Maurer. "That really put us on the map as an agency. Other athletes started saying 'These guys are good guys, but they can also get a deal done!' From word-of-mouth, with the help of good coaches, we've built an agency of men with character and been able to negotiate multi-million dollar contracts."

"I want my friends, family and other clients to have respect for me. I want to look them in the eye, and have my wife look me in the eye and say 'I'm proud of you.'"

— JONATHAN MAURER

The Diamondbacks gave Webb an extension before the 2006 season. Then he went out and won the Cy Young Award. But Arizona also rewarded Webb for what he does in the community and locker room. He's a team leader with strong core values, which is why he chose Jonathan as his agent in the first place. Maurer has actually turned down potential clients (and hundreds of thousands of dollars in commissions) because they were men whose lives are not led by a moral compass. It doesn't matter if you're a 5-tool player. If your 6th tool is not character, Jonathan will politely say 'thanks but no thanks,' wish you luck and no hard feelings.

"I don't push my belief system on people," says Maurer. "I don't do anything without praying about it. My clients and I will hold hands and say grace before meals. We're going to be completely honest and up front and not play any games. I want to be associated with honesty, not controversy."

Today Jonathan and Mike have 15 baseball players and two golfers in their stable. Even if they're not making Major League megabucks, Maurer finds ways to get their families a little nest egg, thanks to a relationship that began while Webb was still a rookie.

"I called Reebok (looking for a marketing deal) and kept getting told no," says Maurer. "I called 13 times over the next several months, and the guy finally says 'If I give you a deal will you leave me alone?' I wasn't rude; I just did it the right way. Brandon made his big league salary, but through a number of marketing deals, he was able to live off the marketing money and save his paychecks. Now, Reebok's VP of Baseball Marketing is a dear friend."

So now you see why this guy is so darn likeable. He treats the guy selling Super Pretzels the same way he treats the Cy Young winner.

"I want my friends, family and other clients to have respect for me," he says. "I want to look them in the eye, and have my wife look me in the eye and say 'I'm proud of you.' I want my wife to say 'My husband is a sports agent, and I'm proud of him.'"

Jonathan, I've only known you for two days, and I'm proud of you. ☐

To keep track of Jonathan's ever-growing client list, visit www.msmsports.net