

National Sports Management

John (JR) Rickert

Principal – Niskayuna High School
 Owner – JR Enterprises Entertainment Group
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Success Magazine: JR, how did you get your start as an agent?

John Rickert: In the late 1990's as a high school teacher and coach, I was working with several athletes from the area who went on to play big time college football. I felt as though I did a great job of guiding these athletes and serving as a mentor. I wanted to explore the process of staying involved with the athletes who wanted to pursue playing professionally. I began researching reputable professional agents whom I could possibly work with and learn from. In July of 2000, I met with Peter Schaffer of All Pro Sports & Entertainment in Denver, Colorado. We devised a plan that enabled me to do consulting work for him and work with professional athletes under him. In the fall of 2001, I recruited several players and signed three to representation contracts. All three signed NFL contracts in 2002, and one of those players, Artis Hicks from the University of Memphis, made it with the Philadelphia Eagles and my career as an agent was officially underway.

SM: You are known as one of the best agents representing players in the NFL. How have you created this reputation for yourself?

JR: I think what put my name on the map in the NFL was working with so many players from smaller schools. Helping guide them into the NFL created my reputation: (Cleo Lemon – Arkansas State, Jamaal Jackson – Delaware State, Jordan Babineaux – Southern Arkansas, Joshua Cribbs – Kent State, Daniel Wilcox – Appalachian State, William Hayes – Winston Salem State). These are all players from smaller schools who signed lucrative multi-million dollar



Photos Courtesy Joan Heffler

contracts in the NFL that I negotiated. In March of 2010, I negotiated more contracts in the NFL free agency market than any other agent. The players included: Joshua Cribbs (Browns), Lorenzo Alexander (Redskins), Artis Hicks (Redskins), Rex Hadnot (Cardinals), Matt Ware (Cardinals), etc.

SM: What makes you stand out from other agents? What personal characteristics help you achieve such success in this field?

JR: My background and experiences are very unique. I played four years of college football and was a classroom teacher and a high school coach. My experiences as an educator have served me very well in my role of guiding young athletes. My ability to accurately assess a player's talent level and project how good of a

professional a respective player will be is also a key component. My relationships with scouts and front office personnel in the NFL have greatly benefited my clients in getting them opportunities. Lastly, my ability to analyze a contract and defend a position in negotiations with proper data has earned me respect as an agent.

SM: You are the principal of Niskayuna High School. How long have you worn that hat?

JR: This will be my eleventh year as the principal at Niskayuna High School. My roots and my passion are in education. Some have criticized the success that I have enjoyed outside of education by saying that it causes a distraction from my work as an educational leader. However, my critics don't see how committed I am and how hard I work for my students and my community.

SM: In what ways do you work to create a positive educational experience for the kids at your school?

JR: I work hard with the help of my staff to create an environment that fosters growth and learning. I believe in putting every student in a situation where he or she can experience success. I promote the academic and co-curricular accomplishments of my students and challenge them to be leaders within their school and community.

SM: How do you juggle the different roles you play in life? Is it a difficult balance?

JR: My life is extremely demanding, yet extremely rewarding. I love the balance of responsibilities that I deal with on a daily basis. The fact that I am involved in so many things guarantees that I will never have a boring day. The only way that I can do it all is by having great support from everyone around me. Without this, none of it would be possible. The business side is successful because of the people that I have chosen to surround myself with who handle the heavy lifting for me. Everyone sees my name associated with the players and the contracts, but there are literally a dozen people working behind the scenes who rarely get recognized. As a principal, I realize that I will be



subject to scrutiny for my activities outside of school. I have learned to take the criticism and use it to challenge myself to become an even better principal. It is an honor and a privilege to be the educational leader of Niskayuna High School and to serve my community.

SM: What advice would you give individuals considering following their dream of becoming an entrepreneur?

JR: You have to be willing to take risks and overcome any setbacks—there will be plenty of them along the way. More recently, I have also learned that you need to be able to survive success. When you attain any level of success, there will always be some potential pitfalls and distractions. Being able to survive successful experiences is as important as learning how to overcome setbacks. Most importantly ... be resilient!