

THE MOST POWERFUL and influential person on New York's sports scene wouldn't have cracked the top 10 five months ago. In June, Charles F. Dolan owned a cable TV company on Long Island and Bob Gutkowski owned a Stanley Cup ring with the Rangers, a shot at an NBA championship with the Knicks, and the title of Madison Square Garden president.

But Dolan, the chairman and CEO of Cablevision Systems, Corp., teamed with ITT Corp. in August to buy the Garden, MSG Network, the Knicks and Rangers for \$1.075 billion. Three weeks later, Gutkowski was out. Today, Dolan didn't survive the Top 40 cut. And Chuck Dolan's the No. 1 person in New York sports.

In the first edition of what will be an annual list of the people who shape the kaleidoscopic face of sports in New York, the Daily

IMPACT PLAYERS

By BARRY MEISSEL

News found during a lengthy examination that the list changes daily. Sadly, Fred Lebow and Dwight Gooden fell off. Neil Smith and Mark Messier skyrocketed when the Rangers won the Stanley Cup. So did Mike Keenan, but he bolted town.

We defined power and influence as qualities that affect our opinions, spur our rooting interest, shape the way we think about our teams, and enhance our sports society. To make the Top 40, you had to distinctly impact the local, not national,

market. That's why there are no commissioners, players association leaders or agents.

We wanted to canvas the entire landscape. More people have heard of Dallas Green than Jack Curran, but the Mets' manager in his two years hasn't come close to affecting his team and sport the way Archbishop Molloy High School's basketball and baseball coach has done in his 37 years.

Athletes took seven of the 40 spots, followed by TV-radio personalities (6), team owners (5), coaches/managers (3), GMs/ADs (3), sportswriters (3), advertising/marketing executives (2), media executives (2), facility executives (2), foundation directors (2), ex-athletes (2), publishers (1), youth program directors (1), and event organizers (1).

Luckily, no politicians made the list. We'll worry about 1995 next year.

1

**CHUCK
DOLAN**

67, chairman and CEO, Cablevision. You can turn up this Cleveland-born businessman's unparalleled grip on New York sports scene in three words: Pay-per-view. With Cablevision and ITT purchase of the Garden on Aug. 28, Dolan owns half the Knicks and Rangers. And Dolan's empire - which includes MSG Network and SportsChannel - also owns cable rights to every New York team except Giants and Jets. Now he and ITT boss Rand Asatogh will determine whether to turn the Garden into a 20,000-seat TV studio. Hold onto your wallet.

2

**GEORGE
STEINBRENNER**

64, principal owner, Yankees. Not because of the way he hires and fires. Not because of his suspensions. Not because he has logged enough back pages to paper the Great Wall of China. Not because he has owned the most storied and successful baseball team in history since 1973. This bombastic shipbuilder from Cleveland (what is it about Cleveland?) is the second-most powerful and influential face in New York sports because he has a lease with New York City for the use of Yankee Stadium that expires after the 2002 season. And until that lease is extended, The Boss holds the city hostage.

3

**GEORGE
YOUNG**

64, vice president and general manager, Giants. Has held his job since 1979, longest reign of any GM in New York. Significantly affected fortunes of New York's most popular sports team. Used his first draft pick 15 years ago to grab Phil Simms and 15 years later second coach Dan Reeves' decision to sign Simms. Hired unproven Bill Parcells as coach in 1983, and a decade later presented him from returning to helm. A one-man demilitarized zone between warring Mafia factions for 11 years. And two more things - Super Bowl titles in '86 and '90.

4

**PAT
RILEY**

49, head coach, Knicks. The mentor to whom all others in New York are compared. Motivational master, the best in town since Bill Parcells. In first three years has reshaped Knicks into championship contender. Style, substance, smarts - packs the whole package. Team's overly physical style prompted NBA rules changes. Has written two books, pitches products, highly sought after inspirational speaker for corporations.

5

**DAVE
CHECKETTS**

38, interim president, Madison Square Garden and president, MSG Sports Group. Utah native with business and marketing acumen who arrived three years ago and helped rebuild Knicks into top-flight, community-minded organization. Wounded Pat Riley out of coaching retirement. Bought dancers into tradition-laden Garden. Runs MSG Network as part of new job, division with which he clashed when he ran Knicks.

6

**BOB
MULCAHY**

58, president and CEO, New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority. Runs Meadowlands, which means he'll be one wooing Steinbrenner's Yanks. Just as he wooed Jets from Shea in '84, provided Devils new home in '82, lured Giants out of New York in '76. Most recently, he brought '94 World Cup and '96 NCAA Final Four to the area.

7

**FELIPE
LOPEZ**

59, freshman guard, St. John's. When 6-5 All-American out of Manhattan's Rice High signed letter of intent last March, he put St. John's back on national map and lifted sagging face of college basketball in city. Native of Dominican Republic who came to the South Bronx five years ago. Has aroused Hispanic community's interest in St. John's - and basketball in general.

8

**FRED
WILPON**

57, president, CEO and co-owner, Mets. His company, Staying Equine, has dabbled in idea of building new sports complex at Flushing Meadow. Low-profile Brooklyn-born businessman still more public than his partner, Nelson Doubleday. Was front and center during '93 season when Mets were disaster on and off field.

9

**NEIL
SMITH**

40, president and GM, Rangers. Needed only five years to turn cursed losers into Stanley Cup champs. Architect of team's first title since 1940, and sole survivor of bloody summertime war with Bob Gutkowski and Mike Keenan. Longest-tenured Ranger GM since Emile Francis.

10

**BUCK
SHOWALTER**

38, manager, Yankees. Reshaped team in his low-key, hard-working image. Contests club's temperament better than any manager/coach in town. Guided Yanks to top of AL East before strike halted his potential pennant-winner. Has managed to keep Boss at bay for three years, no small feat.

11

**JOHN
MARA**

39, executive vice president and general counsel, Giants. Grandson of team's founder Tim, son of co-owner Wellington, quietly becoming key player in Mara family operation. Legal and marketing background position him to control team well into 21st century.

12

**MICKY
MANTLE**

63, Yankee legend. Still exalted after all these years. One of our cherished icons, a larger-than-life figure who still makes headlines by what he does or says. His Central Park South restaurant is a magnet for luminaries and any PR event.

13

**MARK
MESSIER**

33, center, Rangers. Faced with more self-imposed pressure than any New York athlete since Joe Namath in Super Bowl II, he vowed to bring Stanley Cup to New York ... and delivered. Even Madonna was impressed.

14

**JOEL
HOLLANDER**

38, general manager, WFAN. Muscle behind powerful all-sports station's dominance of New York airwaves. Last season added Jets to stable of teams whose games are broadcast on metropolitan area's top revenue-generating station. Negotiates deals with teams and on-air talent, whose ego he's often forced to coddle.

15

**TIM
MCIVER**

53, Mets' color commentator, WOR-TV. Thought-provoking mind has made him baseball's No. 1 analyst. His ideas carry weight, his opinions have impact, and he's not afraid to throw himself into controversy.

16

**PATRICK
EWING**

32, center, Knicks. Would be Top 10 if Knicks won Game 7 in Houston last season, or if he was more visible and vocal off court. Centerpiece of franchise since 1985, he remains team's most indispensable player.

17

**MIKE AND
MAD DOG**

Mike Francesa, 35, and Chris Russo, 40, talk show co-hosts, WFAN. "Mike and the Mad Dog" is town's most vital daily sports listen. They can butcher the English language, but they've broken news stories, stirred pot with biting critiques and created controversies by haping on issues.

18

**DON
MATTINGLY**

33, first baseman, Yankees. Mature excellence for 12 seasons. Hugely respected as team leader although past prime. Withstood decade of Steinbrenner eruptions and was primed for post-season debut when strike spoiled Yanks' season.

19

**RACHEL
ROBINSON**

71, chairperson, Jackie Robinson Foundation. Widow of major leagues' first b.i.c.k. player, established Manhattan foundation in 1973 to perpetuate memory of her husband and his achievements. Provides educational/leadership development for minority youths. Red Sox assistant GM Elaine Weddington is an alum.

20

**ALLAN
STEINFELD**

48, president, New York Road Runners Club. Technical genius and longtime behind-the-scenes wizard of New York Marathon, which annually brings \$90 million into the city. Success close friend Fred Lebow, the marathon's inspirational soul, as symbol of quirescentennial New York event.

21

**TOM
KONCHALSKI**

47, editor/publisher, High School Basketball Illustrated Report. NYC hoops guru and ultimate gm rat. Lanky, bookish expert on high school basketball who provides the Dean Smiths of the world globe, yet precise scouting reports on area's top scholastic players.

22

**BOOMER
ESIASON**

33, quarterback, Jets. East Islip, L.I., native, stand-up personality, dear leader of town's No. 2 football team. Tireless work with Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, visible pitchman. Would be higher on list if he was in his prime as QB, or if Jets weren't perennially mediocre.

23

**DONNA
LOPIANO**

49, executive director, National Women's Foundation. East Meadow, L.I.-based organization wielded impressive local influence when state of New York awarded it \$250,000 in grants. NWF spreading \$25,000 among five high schools, one in each city borough, for worthy girls' athletic programs.

24

**JOHN
DAVIDSON**

41, Rangers' color commentator, MSG Network. Reversed ex-Ranger goalie now hockey analyst supreme. Opinions carry great clout within Rangers organization and throughout hockey community. Worked behind scenes to help settle '92 NHLPA strike.

25

**JERRY
BAILEY**

37, jockey and president of the Jockey Guild. Thoroughbred racing's clubhouse lawyer, and one of its best big-race jockeys (he won '93 Kentucky Derby aboard Sea Hero). Will be a key figure as sport attempts to avoid a nationwide jockeys' strike on Jan. 1.

26

**PHIL
SIMMS**

32, ESPN analyst and former Giant quarterback. Despite forced retirement, still lurks over shoulders of ex-team's two young QBs. Showing great promise as candid TV analyst and occasional WFAN co-host.

27

**MARY
ALBERT**

51, play-by-play announcer, Knicks and Rangers. Regular network presence, but his unmistakable voice and face are forever linked to sights and sounds of Garden's two franchises. His catchwords, "Yes" and "Score" are permanent part of local lexicon. Everyone still tries to imitate Mary.

28

**LEON
HESS**

79, owner, Jets. Most reclusive owner in town. Gae Magnate moved team from Shea to Meadowlands in '84, citing city-owned stadium's deplorable conditions. Is member of NFL broadcasting committee.

29

**JULIE
KROHE**

31, jockey. Bubbly, fiery personality who has attracted positive attention to sport which desperately needs it. Won '93 Belmont Stakes, first woman to win any Triple Crown race. Recovery from shattered ankle in '94 was inspiring story.

30

**RUSTY
STAUB**

50, Mets' color commentator, SportsChannel. Popular ex-Met is successful restaurateur and highly visible sports personality around town. Valued confidant of Mets' co-owner Fred Wilpon.

31

**LOU
D'ALMEIDA**

60, executive director, Bronx Gauchos. Charismatic, sometimes controversial founder of non-profit, after-school program for boys 3 and older in South Bronx. Alums include Felipe Lopez, John Salley, Mark Jackson, Kenny Anderson, Jamal Mashburn.

32

**JOHN
MCMULLEN**

76, chairman and owner, Devils. Old-fashioned, hard-line owner who sold Astros and is frustrated by inability to sell Devils to public since 1982. Has been quite vocal during NHL lockout.

33

**MIKE
LUPICA**

42, Newsday sports columnist. One-man, multi-media (ESPN, Equine) industry of opinion whose ability to influence diminished when he left Daily News to join Long Island Today.

34

**WALT
FRAZIER**

49, Knicks analyst on MSG Network and WFAN. Colorful phrasemaker and insightful, opinionated critic of Knicks. Most visible link to team's glory days of the '70s. Still besieged for appearances and autographs and still the epitome of cool.

35

**BOB
RUSSMAN**

40, Daily News' media columnist. Sports media watchdog for city's largest tabloid. Inflates and influences the influential with acerbic critiques. Even conservative poobah Rush Limbaugh religiously reads the dude.

36

**PHIL
MUSHOCK**

41, Post's media columnist. Conscience of sports, a Ralph Nader in print whose crusades uncover the seamy side of sports business; "scandaloappers," cable companies, sneaker companies and the WWF often feel his wrath.

37

**JACK
CURRAN**

63, Archbishop Molloy HS basketball and baseball coach, well-respected, well-liked dean of city scholastic coaches. Kenny Anderson, Brian Winters and Kevin Joyce among his most famous alumni.

38

**TAYLOR /
DOLDBN**

Alan Taylor 58, and Howard Dolgon 37, partners, Alan Taylor Communications. Brooklyn-born execs run city's pre-eminent sports PR firm which promotes events, products and personalities (e.g. Jamal Mashburn, Riddick Bowe, Pete).

39

**JACK
KAISER**

66, vice president and director of athletics, St. John's. AD since 1972 of city's only nationally known basketball program. Negotiates TV schedules that help keep Red Storm on national view.

40

**BRANDON
STEINER**

35, owner of Steiner Sports Marketing, Brooklyn-born entrepreneur got Lawrence Taylor TV cameo and Phil Rizzuto deal with Yoo-Hoo. Has own radio show on sports business.