

By Jon Lane

Just Remember the Moment

FOR BRANDON STEINER AND STEINER SPORTS MARKETING, THE PATH TO SUCCESS HAS SEEN IT ALL

Just Remember the Moment.” The image is a slam dunk, the words more hard-hitting than Mark McGwire going yard. The slogan is an appropriate one for Steiner Sports Marketing, whose impact in the memorabilia industry has been equivalent to John Starks’ left-handed jam over Michael Jordan and Horace Grant in Game 2 of the 1993 Eastern Conference Finals with 47.3 seconds remaining in the game that sent Madison Square Garden into a frenzy.

“There are moments in sports that we collectively share as fans, times that we adopt as our personal gleaming of history,” said Brandon Steiner, President of Steiner Sports Marketing. “Our own piece of the rock, if you will. The saying, ‘You should have been there’ is one of those ubiquitous terms we encounter throughout life. It sums up worthwhile experiences that have unfortunately been missed.”

The Starks plaque bearing those words greatly summarize the influence of Steiner Sports Marketing on the memorabilia industry, and how it sent the business and its consumers into a state of euphoria. Steiner Sports, featuring marketing and collectible divisions, has set the standards for diversity and marketability by virtue of Steiner’s recognition as one of *The Daily News*’ most 40 influential people in New York and one of *GQ* Magazine’s up and coming sports marketing companies. Not too shabby for a Brooklyn-born poor boy who single-handedly started his business in the early 1980s with just \$4,000.

Fresh off an accounting/personal and industrial relations degree at Syracuse, which gave him the discipline and self-confidence to run a business, he went on to help open New York City’s Hard Rock Cafe in 1984, which started a concept a year later upon his opening of The Sporting Club Bar, Mickey Mantle’s Restaurant and Sports On Broadway. The endeavors helped him make contacts with athletes and crossover into sports marketing.

The mid-1980s presented Steiner with the opportunity to get started with prominent athletes including Keith Hernandez, Ron Darling, Darryl Strawberry, Lawrence Taylor and Joe Morris, who helped market the company through word of mouth while Steiner was in the restaurant business. But the two turning points that took Steiner to the next level were the signing of New York Yankee great Phil Rizzuto to a lifetime marketing contract upon his entry into the

Hall of Fame in 1994 and the recent hiring of former New York Giant running back Ottis Anderson as company spokesperson to help with player relations, appearances and events.

“That was a big turning point. That and signing Ottis Anderson after he won the Super Bowl MVP in 1991,” said Steiner, who also acknowledged reunions with the 1969 Mets and the 1986 Giants as pivotal to the success of the business.

The two divisions that are the fabric of Steiner Sports Marketing are, of course, the collectibles, featuring, in Steiner’s words, “a lot of sizzle and recognition,” and the marketing. Though not as well known to the consumer, the marketing division has existed for 11 years and is most known for matching up athletes with opportunities.

“We’re probably the deepest company there is, one of the few that do all sports. Rich in all areas, diverse with all athletes,” Steiner explained. “We’re diverse with information and we have a database on every athlete who has won anything [gold medals/championships]. For anniversaries or celebrations, we match up with product nicknames and history.”

Using this information, Steiner Sports Marketing has created a niche for advertising, marketability and product interest. According to Steiner, the marketing features numerous in-depth marketing and sales programs. “We do 2,000 appearances a year,” he explained. “Our in-depth relationships in the marketplace is second to none. There’s not a better company to call to set up events. Our creativity stands alone.”

The creativity is care of the AMEX program, in which a corporation approaches Steiner Sports with the idea of doing an incentive program. If the corporation reaches a sales quota established by Steiner Sports, the company will hook them up with agreed memorabilia to keep or resell. For example, if a tire dealership sells 100 tires in a certain amount of time, they get an autographed picture or a letter signed by, say, Mark Messier, which would read, “Good job. Keep up the good work.”

It’s a motivational thing as well. Said Steiner: “When I see great moments happen due to hard work and athletes giving everything they have, I want that in my office to show to my employees. It goes a long way for businesses in terms of boosting sales.”

Steiner Sports Marketing does most of its business in the corpo-