

SU grad practices the art of an athlete's deal to the tune of \$

By Bob Snyder
Staff Writer

Syracuse University graduate Brandon Steiner is no jock; never was.

"I played ball. But at an early age, I knew I was never going to have a pro career," the Brooklynite said from his Steiner Associates office in Manhattan.

He came from impoverished means. His father deserted the family before his son turned 5. His mother, at times on welfare, other times in sales, even peddled auto parts.

Steiner is what is best described as a sports middleman, a businessman whose firm's deals gross more than \$2 million.

From Mom, he learned to conduct more than one phone conversation simultaneously. And probably his aggressive sales style.

At 5, a lemonade stand. At 10, a fruit delivery service. At 11, a paper route.

As a teen, entrepreneurial tendencies were noted in the neighborhood, through his business of delivering bagels and milk to the elderly.

Now, he delivers athletes.

You see Hall of Famer Roy Campanella at a weekend memorabilia show? Steiner got Campy there. A \$100,000 deal, according to Steiner, an '81 SU grad with a degree in accounting, minor in personnel/industrial relations.

Steiner was the first in his family to graduate from college.

"Of my three brothers, I was the dumbest. One of my brothers had 1,400-something SATs.

"I'm grateful to Syracuse," said Steiner, 33. "I got a lot of scholarship aid; amazing, because I was way underqualified.

"My SATs were too low. And I had no money," said the wheeler-dealer whose 1993 company projections are \$2.5 million.

His commission is a tidy 10 to 20 percent, paid by athlete or company, depending on the structure of the deal.

How did he get from poverty to financial success?

"By SU giving me the opportunity. They took a chance, believe me.

"I remember being in statistics class," said Steiner. "Two hundred kids. We did a regression analysis. It was embarrassing.

"By far, I had the lowest SAT scores in the class."

But Steiner's roommate was Ken Mandeville, an offensive back for the 1978-79-80 Orange football teams. "Through Kenny, I got close to Joe Morris, one of my first clients," said Steiner.

First, however, he was a manager at the Hard Rock Cafe, a great place to meet athletes. He got chummy with some of the New York Mets; he began arranging for them to make appearances.

He focused on companies' needs. He still puts athlete and company together.

Another Hall of Fame catcher, Yogi Berra, pushes Yoo Hoo: Steiner's deal, six figures' worth.

Bob Mann golf? Have you seen Mann on SportsChannel or bought his video? Mann teaching Lou Holtz or Jim Palmer or Steve Garvey or ... "Holtz is the only one of those guys we didn't get.

"The Mann deal was nearly seven dig-



File photo

BRANDON STEINER, left, an SU graduate, makes a living lining up athletes with promotion contracts, including ex-SU quarterback Don McPherson.

its," said Steiner, who's involved in a lot of smaller enterprises. "To some of these guys, \$5,000 is like 25 bucks. But our guys get paid before they do the work."

Steiner always wanted to be in the business world. He thought he was a good res-

taurateur, based on his NYC experience, particularly at the Hard Rock Cafe.

And don't forget all those omelettes he'd cooked up as an undergraduate, working the kitchens of his fraternity, a sorority and SU's International Living House.

Additionally, there were the words of one of his teachers on the Hill.

"I used to always come into intermediate accounting — a real tough class — with all these cookies and cakes I'd baked.

"I think his name was Nolan, and he wanted me to promise I'd stick with cooking," said Steiner.

"Schayes. Barry. Hull. Griffey. ... I'm into cooking up father/son deals," said Steiner.

"I had Dolph up at the Hall of Fame this week. And he did an appearance at Herman's (sporting goods) for me."

That's what Steiner's all about. Need an athlete, past or present, and Steiner will line them up.

"We've got about 400 athletes in our bureau," said Steiner.

Former SU wide receiver Rob Moore is "probably my No. 1 football guy on Long Island.

"(Newhouse grad/NYC sportscaster) Len Berman has been very good to me."

And as for Derrick Coleman (New Jersey Nets via SU), Steiner said, "He's a little difficult. It's tough when you're playing in the backyard of someone else (the Knicks).

"His image is distant, cold. But when I mentioned Syracuse, he said, 'Let's rock 'n' roll!'"

Business-wise, it began in a tiny cubicle