

Steinberg

continued from page 7

the perspective that this is how a Troy Aikman and a Terry Bradshaw started out. This is the natural maturation and growth of a young quarterback.

Q: What drew you to Akili from watching him play at Oregon?

A: He had a bazooka. It was just stunning. It was like watching a throwing machine. He was so big and tough and had so much confidence. Under coach [Mike] Bellotti, Oregon has turned into a big offensive football power. [Offensive] coach [Jeff] Tedford and coach Bellotti know what they're doing so the bloodlines, as we say, were good with Akili. He had it all and he came about a half an hour away of being the first pick of the draft. He was still the third most desirable player from that '99 class, but I believe he was the best quarterback. That will be judged 5 years from now.

Q: So far, Leigh, has this been a normal year for you?

A: This is my 26th year and the most frustrating aspect of what I do is the injuries. Some Sundays I feel like I should have gone to med. school instead of law school because it feels like ER. And probably the most disturbing part of it all is the concussions. I have held several concussion seminars because I want our players to understand the dangers. I went through this all last year with Steve Young, and this year in the first game, there was Troy Aikman getting one.

Some of the guidelines I would like to see implemented include new helmet technology, ripping Astroturf out of all fields, having a neurologist on the sidelines and having a mandatory one game absence following a concussion. But the NFL is not serious about the issue. Monday Night Football has two helmets crashing against each other, which obviously

would produce a concussion. So that's a very frustrating aspect.

Q: I know that one of the important parts of your relationship with your clients is to get them out in the communities for charity work. How nice is it to see the athletes get excited about that?

A: Very. I just believe very strongly about the power of role modeling and triggering imitative behavior. And if Bruce Smith stands up and says that real men don't hit women, I know that it triggers a behavioral change. Part of what's been fun with Akili is that we've set up his charitable foundation already. The whole founding spirit of my practice is the concept of role modeling and that the athlete can make a difference and retrace his roots.

Q: One of the major factors in athletes being role models is the television image. So when the audience views a clip of Kerry Collins walking out of jail with sunglasses and a cigar after being arrested for drunken driving, how do you help build Collins back up?

A: The thing there is redemption. Now here is Kerry Collins in the present day who recognizes that he was an alcoholic and he has changed. People have the sense that off-field behavior for athletes has degenerated since the pristine days of Babe Ruth's time. Well, when Babe Ruth got stopped for drunk driving, the cop told him just to go on and when he got arrested for drunk driving, it never got printed in the paper. And when Ty Cobb beat his wife, which he certainly did, he was never arrested. But having said all that, I still feel that role modeling is critical.

Q: So then, what was your opinion of Charles Barkely's commercial a few years ago when he said that, "I am not a role model" and that we should look to our parents?

A: See, with that, he's speaking to a whole set of kids who come from single parent households. And

to tell inner city kids that their father ought to be their role model when there is no father in the house? Yeah, it's a nice concept, Charles, but it's unrealistic. Television brings home the imagery which will make these athletes larger than life whether we choose for that to happen or not.

Q: Do you find it tough to tell the average folk that you can be money oriented as well as make it all personal and real?

A: No, I don't think so. I don't see any contradiction between being compensated for one's craft and trying to be a decent person that makes an impact. I do think being an athlete carries a special responsibility with special obligations. The athletes get great benefits out of being charitable. It forces them to stop being so absorbed and gets them thinking about the community and it really makes them better rounded people.

Q: Everywhere you look now, there's ridiculous money figures. There's Shaq and his big contract and then A-Rod and his free agent demands. How do you keep it all in perspective and keep these athletes level headed?

A: I think it comes from an emphasis in the very beginning on good fundamental values. Someone can be wealthy and still have good values. It comes from an understanding and a sense of respect. Being wealthy doesn't necessarily equate to happiness. There's a lot of wealthy people making a lot of psychiatrists wealthy.

People need to learn to deal with success in a way that when the cheering stops and when they're not the big star, they can handle that. Fame and glory are fleeting. So what we're doing is preparing people for a second career and using the offseason to figure out what else they can do in life. Like Steve Young, who ends his career, and he moves very quickly into being the chair of a high tech start

up company that has 140 employees.

Q: How important for you was the movie "Jerry Maguire" and how it portrayed agents with personality and a human side?

A: That's the reason I agreed to spend so much time with director Cameron Crowe. When he called me up and asked me in 1993, I knew that that would probably be the most prominent movie to run with the sports agent theme. I've read his work in Rolling Stones, and I've seen "Fast Times at Ridgemoor High" (also directed by Crowe) and thought it was hilarious, so I agreed. He started out going with me to the NFL Draft in '93 where Bledsoe got drafted and went through that experience. He went through the NFL meetings in Palm Desert and that's where he went up to [former NFL safety] Tim McDonald's room, who was a free agent then. That's where Cameron picked up the scene where Cuba Gooding Jr. and the Maguire character walked through the media circuit at the hotel. He was upstairs and asking Tim what he was looking for in the experience and CNN was on in the background with the show, "Moneyline" and Tim said, "Well, it's the money" and Cameron wrote, "Show me the money."

Cameron took everything out of my office and put Tom Cruise's head in all my pictures. And I was on the set for quite awhile and actually showed [actor] Jerry O'Connell how to throw a football.

Warren Moon and I have been together for 23 years. Cameron saw that. He saw the real way in which we interacted. He saw me hug Warren after a game. I wanted to help make the movie as reality based as I could.

Q: Have you worked on any other films since?

A: After that, I went on and was a technical advisor for Kevin Costner's movie, "For Love of the Game" and I did Oliver Stone's "Any Given Sunday." I worked with

Cameron Diaz there [laughs]... that was a tough role. And I spent time with Al Pacino. I just try to help benefit the reality aspect of the movies.

Q: After so many years, are you still as excited each morning as you were way back when?

A: Oh yeah, I'm still excited. We've expanded into other fields now. A lot of what we do is content supply. It's not just the games. It's television, Internet, radio and video games. So that means how many ideas can we think of that could be good sports content? And that's fun and exciting. That's where a lot of our business is going.

Q: We have a prominent sports marketing program here at Oregon, as well as a good law school, and a lot of students obviously want to know if it's still possible to crack the sports agency business?

A: Yes, it is possible to be a sports agent. My advice would be to go to business school or law school and garner basic skills. Athletes want specific skills in their life. They can be legal skills, negotiating skills, business management skills or marketing skills. The second thing that's important is to really have a caring for athletes. Remember that the services of an athlete usually occur when the rest of this world is at rest: in the evenings and on the weekends, so it requires a real strong commitment.

And I would also encourage people to think about not simply the area of representation. There's all these different avenues that one can go into. They can be the marketer or the person who does the endorsements. They can be the financial plan advisor, or someone that strictly represents legal services.

Q: Well, I know you're a busy man, so I'll let you go. Best of luck to you.

A: OK, take it easy.

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