

**DIME MAGAZINE
DECEMBER 2002**

**WHEN TALKING ABOUT THE GREATEST GAME ON EARTH,
WHAT DEFINES**

POWER?

**IS IT STRAIGHT GAME? IS IT STACKS OF MONEY?
IS IT THE POWER TO SHAPE TRENDS AND MOVE PRODUCT?
THE PEOPLE WE SELECTED TO GRACE OUR SECOND ANNUAL POWER
RANKINGS ARE ATHLETES, AGENTS, COACHES, ENTREPRENEURS
AND EXECUTIVES - AND THEY'RE THE ONES WHO SHAPE THE
GAME OF BASKETBALL TODAY AND WILL STEER IT INTO THE FUTURE.
IF YOU ONLY HAVE 30 PEOPLE PROGRAMED INTO YOUR 2-WAY,
THESE ARE THE ONES YOU WANT:**

1. David Stern. NBA Commissioner (Last Year: 1)

If lists of basketball's "most powerful people" started coming out annually 18 years ago when Stern took over the NBA, he would have topped the list 18 years in a row. Stern, just for good measure, put even more space between himself and everyone else with a major power move this summer. Once the League's television contract with NBC expired, Stern brokered a deal with the Walt Disney Co. (which owns ESPN) and AOL Time Warner worth an estimated \$4.6 Billion over six years.

**2. SFX Entertainment/David Falk/Arn Tellem.
Basketball superagents (Last Year: 2)**

Michael, Kobe, Krzyzewski - just three of the hundreds of names in sports and entertainment represented under the umbrella that is SFX. In basketball alone, SFX represents roughly 33 percent of the NBA.

3. Adam Silver/Russ Granik. President of NBA Entertainment/NBA Deputy Commissioner (Last Year: 5)

David Stern can't run the show forever, and Silver and Granik are the two frontrunners to take over when the Godfather steps down. Word on the street is there's a power struggle going on behind the scenes and these two are jockeying for position for when the time comes.

4. Michael Jordan. Washington Wizards (Last Year: 3)

MJ still have serious juice. He's broken ground all over the industry, but nothing compares to the damage he's done in the footwear industry. Mike's Jordan VII was the first \$150 hoops shoe and his latest, the Jordan XVII, was the first \$200 pair. His Jordan Brand pulls in serious coin for Nike and he still puts people in the seats wherever he goes. When the Wizards visited the Nuggets in the preseason of this year, Denver paid the Wizards \$200,000 just to ensure that Michael would play.

5. George Bodenheimer. President, ESPN (Last Year: 7)

Bodenheimer is #5 with a bullet. In the basketball world, ESPN has made itself one of the big boys. With the new deal, ESPN inked with the League to telecast more than 90 games this season, it has suddenly cornered the NBA viewing market. Besides that, as part of the deal Bodenheimer helped to engineer, ESPN will also broadcast the draft lottery, the draft itself and the first and second rounds of the playoffs. That's not to mention the influence of SportsCenter and the Burgeoning ESPN Original Entertainment division.

6. Mike Krzyzewski. Head Coach, Duke U. (Last Year: 10)

Coach K is by far the most dominant force on the college scene. The aura he's created has made Duke the program all others strive to emulate. Rarely does he ever lose out on a recruit that he really wants. If he decided to bounce to the NBA, he could just about name his job ... and his price.

7. Billy Hunter. Executive Director of the National Basketball Players Association (Last Year: 9)

Since 1996, Billy Hunter has been the face of the NBA players union, and his power goes in cycles. As we get closer to the next round of collective bargaining between players and owners (in 2004), Hunter will begin to creep up this list.

8. Phil Knight. Founder, CEO, President and Chairman of Nike, Inc. (Last Year: 6)

While the hoop shoe industry may be sagging, Nike is still the top dog. And even though companies like Reebok and AND I may be taking chunks of Nike's empire, it's still Nike and everyone else. And as long as Nike has Michael and a lineup of players that include personalities like Vince Carter and Paul Pierce, they'll stay on top.

9. Shaquille O'Neal. Los Angeles Lakers (Last year: 18)

So what if he insists on doing those Nestle commercials? He's arguably the most physically dominant player in the history of the game, and for that reason alone he'll have a spot on this list as long as he keeps playing.

10. Paul Fireman. President/CEO Reebok (Last Year: not listed)

As his counterpart, Phil Knight slips a few pegs, Fireman rockets up the list. After stealing multiple players right out from under Nike's nose, most notably Baron Davis, Reebok's stable of young, marketable talent is a force to be reckoned with. Besides Baron, RBK also boats Allen Iverson (who is signed to a lifetime contract), Steve Francis and Jason Richardson. At press time, Reebok was jousting with Nike to sign the services of Kobe Bryant. Reebok has also gained a foothold in the hip-hop/music world by signing such talents as Jadakiss, Missy Elliott and Shakira.

11. Allen Iverson. Philadelphia 76ers (Last year: 8)

In terms of marketing value and fan popularity, there's AI, and then there's everybody else. It doesn't matter how many off-court incidents there are, how many scraps he has with his coach, how many practices he misses, with fans under the age of 30, Allen's #1.

12. Bret "Bear" Bearup. President, CSI Capital, NBA "Financial Advisor" (Last Year: 12)

The game's most powerful player broker (and most controversial figure) keeps on doing his thing. Serving as an advisor to upper echelon high school and college talent, Bear advises the top prospects on where to go to school and when to turn pro. In return, the players usually sign him as their "financial advisor" when they get to the League.

13. Bill Duffy. President, BDA Sports Management (Last Year: not ranked)

If there's anyone who has the potential to take a significant bite out of the SFX stranglehold on NBA clientele, it's Duffy. His agency continues to gain momentum each year, and his 2002 rookie class includes Jay Williams, Drew Gooden and Kareem Rush. His other NBA clients include Steve Nash, Michael Olowokandi, Antonio Davis and Speedy Claxton to name a few.

14. Myles Brand. NCAA President (Last year: not ranked)

Brand, 60, takes over for the retired former president Cedric Dempsey. Brand gained national fame during his tenure as president at Indiana University when he dismissed Bobby Knight.

15. Maurizio Gherardini. GM, Benetton Treviso (Last Year: not ranked)

Hailed as the European Jerry West, Gherardini is at the forefront of the Euro invasion of the NBA ranks. A true visionary in terms of evaluating and cultivating European talent, he is light years ahead of his peers. Players who came up under Gherardini include 2002 first-rounders Nikoloz Tskitishvili and Bostjan Nachbar. It's only a matter of time before an NBA franchise piles enough cash in front of him to lure him stateside.

16. Yao Ming. Houston Rockets (Last Year: not ranked)

Ming held the basketball world in suspense all spring and summer while trying to free himself from his Chinese team, the Shanghai Sharks. With some serious weight training, is he the answer to Shaq? He also has the rabid backing of the most populated country in the world - nearly 1.3 billion Chinese, opening up unimaginable marketing opportunities for the NBA. How many Ming jerseys do you think will be flooding the streets of Shanghai this season? That's not to mention the vast money-making opportunities available through summer tours, exhibition games, and whatever else the Rockets, Ming's camp and the Chinese government can dream up.

17. Kobe Bryant. Los Angeles Lakers (Last year: 15)

A three-time champion and favorite for a fourth, Kobe's well on his way to carving out his legacy. As a spokesman for Sprite, McDonald's and soon, the sneaker company of his choice, he has the marketing side of the game under wraps as well. KB8's power ranking slips a little, though, because his allure to young fans seems to be waning a bit.

18. Tim Duncan. San Antonio Spurs (Last Year: not ranked)

He is so valuable to the San Antonio Spurs that the franchise built a new arena partly to keep him in town. He's a free agent after this season and although he'll most likely stay a Spur, NBA squads will be pulling out all the stops with hopes of luring him away. A move to another team could drastically effect the balance of power in the NBA. And, if he had any kind of personality, he'd be a marketing machine.

19. LeBron James. Senior, St. Vincents-St. Mary (Last Year: 20)

The big issue now is what shoe company the 2003 #1 pick will sign with. Just a senior in high school, James has Nike and adidas at each other's throats for his services. Just this summer, in an effort to woo LeBron and his family, the two companies flew them back and forth between the adidas ABCD Camp in New Jersey and the Nike All-American Camp in Indianapolis. The bidding war will be unprecedented.

20. Jerry West. GM, Memphis Grizzlies (Last Year: not ranked)

When the Grizzlies approached West about taking over their franchise, West gave them his asking price, a number he never thought Memphis would match. But when they offered West a multi-year contract reportedly worth more than \$5 million a year, he couldn't say no. His effect on the Grizzlies franchise is already being felt as he selected Drew Gooden with the fourth pick of the June draft.

21. Wieden + Kennedy. Ad agency for Nike/Brand Jordan (Last Year: not ranked)

Their "Freestyle" Nike commercial from two years ago was the most popular basketball commercial ever made. They followed it up this year with the black and white Spike Lee-directed Brand Jordan ads, the Vince Carter/Rucker Park spot and the Roswell Rayguns. Wieden + Kennedy has been the commercial face of Nike basketball since the beginning, shaping the visual perception of the entire basketball culture from spots with Mars Blackmon back in the day to the "Just Do It" campaigns of the '90s. Other clients include Coke, ESPN and Miller Beer.

22. Sonny Vaccaro. Director, Sports Development, adidas (Last Year: 14)

The patriarch of AAU basketball. For the last four decades Vaccaro has presided over a phenomenon that started as a single tournament outside of Pittsburgh in 1965 and has become a multi-million dollar business that sees colleges and sneaker companies pitted against one another for the favor of high school stars. Sonny's influence is far-reaching in terms of persuasion and his ability to funnel players towards college programs and shoe companies. His latest task? To convince LeBron James to sign with adidas. It's possible, considering that Vaccaro paired MJ with Nike and T-Mac and Kobe with adidas.

23. Phil Jackson. Coach, Los Angeles Lakers (Last Year: 21)

Still the most dominant coach in the League, and it looks like he's going to collect yet another championship trophy (his 10th). Every team in the NBA would break the bank to have him sitting on the bench. And if the U.S. is ever really serious about stomping the competition in international play, Jax is the coach to make it happen. Shaq says he'd only play if Phil were the coach.

24. Dick Vitale. Commentator, ESPN (Last year: 22)

Yes, he drones on and on, usually about the same four or five players. Those four or five players though, after being drilled into your head all season long, are stuck there. Vitale can single-handedly make a college basketball player a star.

25. Seth Berger. Co-Founder, AND 1 (Last Year: not ranked)

AND 1 continues to hang tough in the sneaker market, holding down the #2 spot worldwide in terms of basketball sneakers sold. With its summer Mix Tape Tour and the show "Streetball" on ESPN, AND 1 has become synonymous with playground ball.

26. Charles Barkley. Commentator, TNT (Last Year: not ranked)

He would be ranked higher if there were more games on TNT/TBS this season. Sir Charles is the reason that TNT's in-studio NBA pre- and post-game show is the best in the business.

27. Mark Cuban. Owner, Dallas Mavericks (Last Year: 13)

Cuban infuriates other owners with his freewheeling spending and attempts at pulling apart deals between the competition. He's taken the Mavericks from League laughing stock to one of the premier places to play in professional sports. Running his franchise more like it's a rotisserie

team, no price is too high for Cuban when comes to acquiring the best possible talent for his club.

28. Leon Rose. Agent (Last Year: not ranked)

Rose has cornered the market on Philadelphia-area ballers, from AI to Dajuan Wagner. With Iverson hooked up to a long-term deal with the 76ers and a lifetime endorsement deal with Reebok, it's unclear just how much power Rose has. When the time comes for renegotiations, Rose will rocket up the list.

29. Jason Kidd. New Jersey Nets (Last Year: not ranked)

By bringing him into the mix, the New Jersey Nets clawed all the way to the NBA Finals. The New York airwaves are already abuzz over whether J-Kidd will re-sign when his contract expires at the end of the season. His asking price will presumably be the maximum, and if he chose to align himself with Tim Duncan, they would instantly have a squad that could contend with the Lakers.

30. Donald Sterling. Owner, Los Angeles Clippers (Last Year: not ranked)

On this list not for what he does, but more for what he doesn't do. For the first time ever, ballers actually want to play for the Clippers, but they're wary because they know that Sterling won't pay them what they're worth and doesn't seem to be committed to winning. The Clippers now have Elton Brand, Andre Miller, Lamar Odom and Michael Olowokandi on the payroll - all players with high market value. Odom's been trade bait forever now and the Kandi Man and Dre could walk at season's end because Sterling won't pay to keep them.

THE NEXT FIVE

31. Peter Vecsey. Columnist, NY Post

Whether in his column in the New York Post or his television commentary, Vecsey seems to always get the scoop before anyone else. Now if he were right more times than he were wrong, we would have ranked him higher on this list.

32. Bob Knight. Coach, Texas Tech University

He may be exiled to Lubbock, Texas, but The General still has juice.

33. Mark Laidler. CEO, 310 Motoring Company

310 is the leading car customizing company for NBA athletes. Partly owned by Chris Mills, 310 sets the standard for NBA and hip-hop styling.

34. Jeff Kessler. Attorney, Weil, Gotshal & Manges

As legal counsel for the NBA players association, Jeff Kessler represents the players' interests in disputes with the League.

35. Pat Summitt. Women's Coach, University of Tennessee

Summitt dominates the landscape of women's basketball. In the mold of Coach K, rarely does she lose out on a recruit she wants, and she could have any position in the world of women's basketball that she wants.