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Interview with a Milwaukee pro sports agent

By [Andy Tarnoff](#)

Milwaukee-based sports agent Brian Lammi doesn't claim life is too much like the movies. But even though the soft-spoken businessman isn't shouting, "Show me the money," he is finding it in endorsements for clients like Brad Johnson, Donald Driver, Ahman Green and others.

We caught up with Lammi, who owns Lammi Sports Management, recently to talk about the business of sports. Not surprisingly, it's a career that's more about being business savvy than being a Monday morning quarterback. But that's not to say it's without its perks ...

OMC: Let me start by asking the question you probably get a lot: How much is your life like "Arliss" or "Jerry McGuire?"

BL: I hear it a lot, but the only similarity I have with Jerry McGuire is that neither of us can dance very well. There are some similarities behind the scenes in managing the relationships. Making sure that they get picked up from an airport because they get stranded, or their wife needs babysitting help on a certain day.

OMC: So it's a little less exciting than Arliss' life?

BL: I think it's a lot less exciting. I do enjoy it and love what I do, because I am in sports. The athletes trust me to manage their careers and their brands in some capacity. But it's a lot of hard work to build a business.

OMC: Were you an athlete?

BL: I was in high school, but probably not good enough of one to have a future.

OMC: Is it tough to relate with these incredibly talented and gifted athletes?

BL: I think I relate to them more on the business of sports and marketing, where I'm more of an expert than they are, and that's why we have a relationship in the first place. If I was a coach or talking to them on the phone asking why they made that block or dropped that pass, there would be that problem. Whenever I'm dealing with these athletes, I rarely talk to them about the game. I know my limitations.

OMC: Does that make you different from former players turned agents, like Sean Jones?

BL: They have a different story to tell. Because I'm very specific on the endorsement side, what they're doing on the field doesn't always coming into play.

OMC: So you don't ever do player contracts?

BL: Correct. (My clients) Brad Johnson and Donald Driver, for example, have separate contract agents.

OMC: Did you cross-over into the player contracts?



BL: No, what I do is extremely rare, to just specialize in the marketing field. I became a certified agent to represent players, but I didn't have a lot of experience in that area. It's such a competitive field, that I think dropping that certification allowed me to do more things on the marketing side.



OMC: How did you get into the business?

BL: I got pretty lucky. I was planning on become a high school social studies teacher, but I got a degree in Sports Management from UW-LaCrosse. I was fortunate enough to get a start early on working with athletes, and I've been able to get a lot of experience since then.

OMC: How do you find your clients?

BL: In some cases, like Edgar Bennett and Brad Johnson, I met them at firm I used to work for. For Donald Driver, for instance, I had gotten to know him through Santana Dotson and the variety of charity events we run. Instead of recruiting him, I had Brad Johnson talk to him at the Pro Bowl.

OMC: How do agents make money? Do you get a cut from the players or are you paid a flat fee?

BL: It does vary, but we take a percentage of revenues that we earn for a player. We don't make any money until they make money.

OMC: Tell me a little about your Packers TV show.

BL: "Inside The Pack" is a fun show that Donald Driver really wanted to do. The show goes around the state and into Illinois and Iowa. We had 20 different Packers on the show this year, including Brett Favre, which was a pretty huge deal for us.

OMC: Do you ever back off and marvel what you do for a living? Were you a Packers fan growing up?

BL: I was a Packers fan growing up, and I'm still a fan of sports. Although I find myself cheering for business reasons, not just for the love of the sport.

OMC: Would you root for the Buccaneers over the Packers if meant it helped Brad Johnson?

BL: (Laughing) I have no comment. But I've become a bigger fan of the Buccaneers than I ever thought I'd be.

OMC: Have you had any Kobe Bryant-type scandals with your clients?

BL: I've been pretty fortunate in the two and a half years I've been on my own, but we worked with Eugene Robinson at my former job. That was a pretty tough situation around the Super Bowl.

OMC: If Kobe Bryant was your client, what would you advise him to do?

BL: I would be encouraging him to stay out of the limelight, hoping that the situation blows over to some extent. I think for the existing sponsors that he does have, I'd try to focus on his success on the basketball court.