Four STHM students learn from legendary sports agent at one-day academy

At every turn of his career, Leigh Steinberg has asked for a business card. It’s how he started a Rolodex, in the days that predated smart phones and digital contact lists. It’s also how Steinberg turned face-to-face connections into potential business opportunities.

One of the nation’s best-known sports agents, Steinberg has represented more No. 1 NFL draft picks and NFL Hall of Famers than anyone else in his trade. That didn’t happen overnight, either, he said. He’d often turn to the blank sides of those business cards he had collected and jot down personal notes about someone with whom he had interacted.

“All it takes is one player,” Steinberg said. “One successful player gives you a practice.”

Steinberg brought his travelling Sports Agent Academy to Philadelphia, sharing tales and tips on a career that has spanned 41 years. He addressed a room of college students and established professionals Aug. 1 on the 56th floor of One Liberty Place, in the Law Offices of Remick & Cabott.

Four students from the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management (STHM) attended the one-day agent academy, thanks to the financial support of a Fox School of Business alumnus. Philadelphia businessman and entrepreneur Cosmo DeNicola, FOX ’76, sponsored the Sport and Recreation Management majors: Kristen Kemnitzer, Erin Johnson, JaCarl J. Smith, and Matthew Swiren.

The STHM students shared a few minutes with DeNicola, expressing their thanks for his sponsorship to participate in Steinberg’s event. Kemnitzer called it “an incredible experience to learn more about the professional sports industry, and connect with accomplished alumni.”

“One day, I plan on being a director of player personnel, if not an athletics director,” added Johnson, “and after sitting in the academy and getting advice from the greatest agent, it made me more excited to start my career.”

From getting started and getting licensed, to building a base of clients, Steinberg covered the sports-agent industry from top to bottom during his Sports Agent Academy, which has visited Newport Beach, Calif., and Houston, and has plans for similar one-day academies in New York, Miami, and Chicago.

Steinberg, who’s often credited as the inspiration for the sports-agent movie, Jerry Maguire, said he’s built his name as a top-tier agent by doing just that, working with clients who have good hearts, good families, and a good sense of community.

–Christopher A. Vito