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Dell a second-generation agent for the Noahs



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AGENTS
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Sports agency pioneer **Donald Dell** has an oral agreement to represent **Joakim Noah**, power forward on the NCAA championship Florida team who is projected to be one of the top NBA draft picks this year as well as one of the most marketable players entering the NBA.

It may seem an odd pairing. Dell, group president of **SFX** tennis, media and events, is best known as a former tennis player and tennis agent and founder of **ProServ**. Relationships play a big part in the sports business, though, particularly athlete representation, and such is the case here.

Dell was the agent for tennis player and musician **Yannick Noah**, who won the French Open in 1983 and is the father of Joakim Noah. "I am a legitimate family friend," Dell said. "I have known Joakim since he was born."

"A year ago, Yannick said to me, 'When Joakim turns pro, I want you to handle everything,'" said Dell, who was part of a group acquired by Louisville, Ky.-based private equity firm **Blue Equity** last year. Dell and Joakim shook hands on their representation agreement after Florida defeated Ohio State in the national championship game earlier this month.

Dell built his career on handshake deals and on relationships.

Dell met Yannick Noah through his first athlete client, the late, great **Arthur Ashe**. Dell played tennis with Ashe and agreed to represent him, he said, after he introduced Ashe to the late founder of **IMG**, **Mark McCormack**.

Dell had recommended to Ashe that he sign with McCormack because, he told him, "I think he is the best."

But Ashe told Dell, "Why don't you represent me?" Dell said.

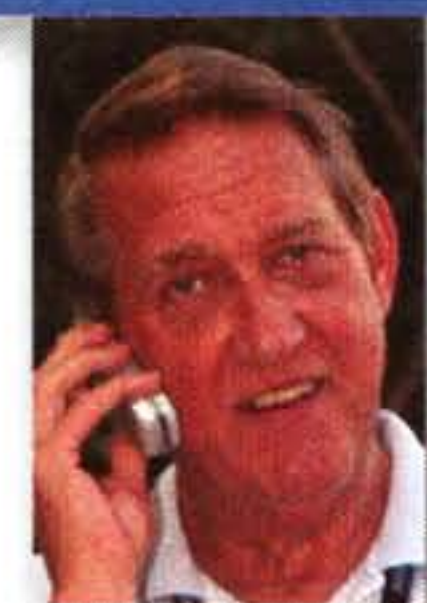
Now, several generations later, Dell said he is excited to represent someone whom he thinks could be the next superstar.

"Of course, I think he is the most marketable player in the draft," Dell said of Joakim Noah. "He is very good-looking. He is very accomplished. ... He will be a global player more than anyone in the draft."

NBADraft.net ranks Noah No. 11 in its mock 2007 NBA draft.

Dell said he will be recertified with the **National Basketball Players Association** and that veteran football and basketball agent **Bill Strickland**, whose practice was also acquired by Blue Equity last year, will also be involved in Noah's representation. Dell has represented a number of great NBA players, including, notably, **Michael Jordan**. **David Falk**, who is best known as Jordan's agent, worked for Dell at his company, ProServ, before Falk left to form **Falk Associates Management Enterprises**. ■

"I have known Joakim since he was born."



DONALD DELL
ON NEW CLIENT JOAKIM NOAH



Noah, who won two titles at Florida, "will be a global player," Dell says.

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