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Metro Business

Sports marketer seeks to break out from crowd

Firm links small business with athletics, entertainment

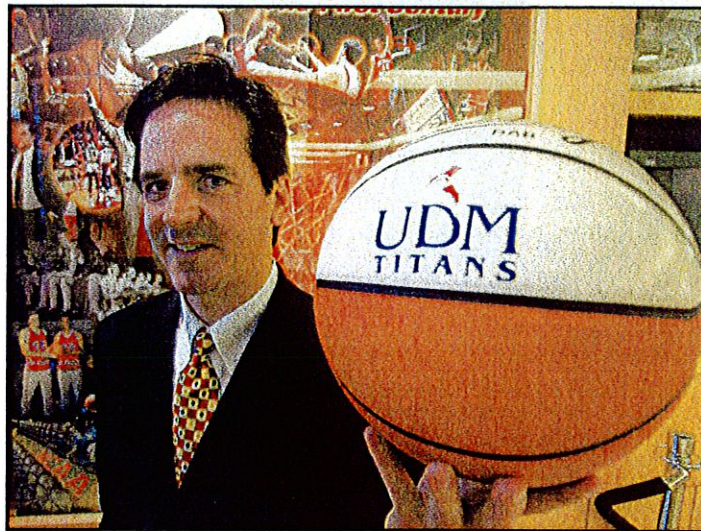
By Neal Haldane
Special to The Detroit News

BINGHAM FARMS — With a front-row seat for everything from the Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan escapade to three Stanley Cups, Mike Dietz has experienced the highs and lows of the sports industry.

Now after 17 years with the Detroit Tigers and Red Wings, plus other parts of Ilitch Holdings, Dietz has opened his own management firm focused on helping small- and medium-sized businesses connect with the sports and entertainment arenas.

"We want to help companies figure out how they can use sports and entertainment to help sell their products," said Dietz, who started the firm in December with David Trott of the Trott and Trott law firm. "We help companies identify, negotiate and implement sports entertainment partnerships."

That means Dietz Trott Sports and Entertainment competes with at least 3,000 other companies nationwide that handle sports marketing, according to Becky Vallett, executive editor of the Team



Mike Dietz through his company Dietz Trott Sports and Entertainment helps small- and mid-sized companies navigate the sports and entertainment marketing fields.

Marketing Report.

"We actually sponsor a sports sponsorship fact book that has 1,072 pages of contact information for people involved in sports marketing," Vallett said. "It's a pretty big business and there is a lot of money in sports marketing."

She cited the recent \$75 million deal the Texas Rangers signed to rename its baseball stadium Ameritrust Field in Arlington.

With that much money involved and all that competition, Vallett said Dietz Trott has to figure out a way to stand out from the crowd.

"They need to find a niche that they're better at than anybody else, something they can grab on and build their name

from," she said.

Dietz said the contacts and skills he developed while working for Ilitch Holdings will help his firm handle naming rights, marketing, sponsorship, contract negotiations and event management issues.

And with a spate of upcoming high-profile sporting events headed to the Detroit area—the Ryder Cup, Major League Baseball's All-Star Game, the Super Bowl and the NCAA Final Four—Dietz said it's a great time to start this type of business.

This year, he expects his firm to generate revenues of between \$500,000 and \$700,000, which is projected to grow to \$1 million in 2005.

"In Michigan, there is a lot

of passion for sports entertainment," he said. "When you can tie in sports or entertainment with your product, it's a great vehicle for building sales."

The University of Detroit-Mercy became Dietz Trott's first client this year and will use the firm to market the men's basketball team to potential sponsors, improve awareness of Titans basketball and increase attendance at games, said Brad Kinsman, the school's athletic director.

"He will be providing some promotional marketing sponsorship assistance," Kinsman said. "While we'll continue to do a lot of that on our own, he has some contacts we don't have. There is room for expansion and growth. More is better."

Neal Haldane is a Metro Detroit freelance writer.

Dietz Trott Sports and Entertainment

Headquarters: Bingham Farms

Services: Sports and entertainment marketing, naming rights and sponsorships, contract negotiations, hospitality and event management

Employees: 5

Clients: University of Detroit Mercy, Arts Beats and Eats, Farmer Jack, Detroit Lions

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