

Charleston-based NBA scout lends student athletes a hand

Expands scholarship service to underserved areas

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It began as a favor to a family friend.

Ten years later, Lane Odom, a scout for the NBA's Utah Jazz, has a burgeoning business helping high-achieving academic students find the right fit in the ultra-competitive world of college athletics.

Over the past decade, Odom and his partners at Sportmatch — a college placement and consulting firm — have helped place more than 300 students at some of the most elite universities in

the country, such as Harvard, Princeton, Yale and MIT.

Odom has worked with young men and young women, including the sons and grandsons of some of the most recognizable names in sports and entertainment. Former Washington football coach and NASCAR mogul Joe Gibbs, ESPN basketball analyst Jay Bilas and actor Julianne Moore have all used Odom's expertise.

But arguably Odom's most famous client is New York Giants quarterback

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FILE/AP

New York Giants quarterback Daniel Jones was having little success finding an athletic scholarship until Lane Odom and Sportmatch stepped in to help.

Scout helps students find scholarships

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Daniel Jones.

Odom can remember the first time he saw Jones on the campus at Charlotte Latin High School. He remembers a skinny kid that coaches and teammates raved about.

"One of his teammates told me Daniel was 'the man,'" said Odom, who has lived in Charleston for the past year. "He just had that 'it' factor that's hard to quantify."

Despite throwing for nearly 7,000 yards and 98 touchdowns during his high school career, Jones received very little interest from colleges. He originally committed to Princeton, but Ivy League schools do not hand out athletic scholarships.

It wasn't until Odom and Marty Wild stepped in that Jones got on the radar of Duke head football coach David Cutcliffe. After starting three seasons for the Blue Devils and throwing for more than 8,200 yards, Jones was drafted by the New York Giants with the sixth overall pick in 2019.

He signed a four-year, \$25 million contract with the Giants.

"My recruiting activity was very limited until Lane and Marty agreed to help," Jones said. "Duke was the right fit as it checked all my boxes. It helped prepare me for the pros."

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Lane Odom
NBA scout

The firm charges clients between \$5,000 and \$7,000.

Since not all families can afford the cost, Odom has begun reaching out to community foundations to help find underserved communities.

"You have all of these very talented academically strong kids that have a hard time finding the right college," Odom said. "This is an area where we really want to expand our reach. We think getting those kids in underserved communities into the right colleges could change their lives."

One such pro bono client is Naval Academy basketball player Patrick Dorsey. Dorsey's father, Alan Dorsey, had passed away from cancer in 2016. Like Jones, Dorsey had few college options before Odom reached out to the Naval Academy.

"We never signed a contract, but Lane just picked up our cause and ran with it," said Mi-

chelle Dorsey, Patrick's mother. "I'm not sure Patrick would have ended up at Navy without Lane's help."

The concept of Sportmatch found its genesis in 2010, when a family friend asked Odom to help evaluate his son's basketball talent. Odom, an assistant basketball coach for 16 years at Alabama, UNC Charlotte, Missouri and East Carolina, had plenty of experience evaluating prospects.

"They just wanted an honest assessment," Odom said.

Will Reigel ended up playing for Davidson, where he is an assistant basketball coach.

"I could see there were parents out there that needed help finding their way through the maze that is college athletics," said Odom, whose father Dave Odom was the head basketball coach at South Carolina and Wake Forest. "College is a 40-year decision, not a four-year decision," Odom said. "Very few college athletes become professional athletes, but their college experience shapes the rest of their lives."

In recent years, Sportmatch has branched out to other sports as well, including baseball, soccer and lacrosse.

For further information on Sportmatch, go to sportmatch-llc.com.

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