

Alcoholism, bankruptcy beset super-agent

Steinberg tells of his downfall

By David Leon Moore
USA TODAY

IRVINE, Calif. — In the movie *Jerry Maguire*, there is a scene in which the title character, played by Tom Cruise and modeled after real-life super-agent Leigh Steinberg, gets drunk in response to losing his job, his big clients and his gorgeous girlfriend.

Of course, in a Hollywood movie, the agent sobers up the next day, gets back to work and eventually finds true meaning in life — along with getting another gorgeous girlfriend and a big contract for his last loyal NFL client.

This differs from the real life of Steinberg in two crucial ways:

Steinberg usually didn't stop after just one night of drinking, and he eventually had zero NFL clients.

Steinberg, who once represented half the starting quarterbacks in the NFL and during one stretch represented the first pick in the NFL draft in six out of seven years, has not represented an NFL player since 2007. Nor does he work in lavish Newport Beach offices with the view of the Pacific Ocean, or live in dream houses along the Orange County coast.

These days, he leases a townhouse and works in a drab, one-story building in an industrial park area of Irvine, trying to figure out a new life for himself, hoping to work through his recently declared bankruptcy toward the goal of once again representing athletes.

The real-life Jerry Maguire, after a series of business setbacks,



Getty Images for Mercedes-Benz

Steinberg: He has been sober for nearly two years, he says.

he prefers not to mention publicly because of its tradition of anonymity of its members. He has a sponsor. He works the 12 steps.

And he says that today, if he doesn't drink, he will have been sober for 703 consecutive days. His two-year sober birthday will be March 21.

in March 2010. That is when he finally committed to working a 12-step recovery program that he had attempted only halfheartedly through earlier short periods of sobriety. He attends regular meetings of the group, which

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Steinberg clarified a lot of his financial and physical health last month when he declared bankruptcy and issued a long statement explaining that alcoholism had been the cause of many of his problems.

He says going public was liberating.

"I am an alcoholic today and will be for the rest of my life," he says. "I don't want anyone else to go through the pain and denial that I did. You only live this life once. I still think I can be of service."

Steinberg admits to having caused a lot of wreckage and harmed people both financially and emotionally. But he has some friends who have stuck by him and are still rooting for him. One is SMU football coach June Jones, a longtime client and friend. "Leigh always had the athletes' best interests in mind,"

Jones says. "He was so different from everybody else. He's a special guy. He's got a big heart."

Sitting in his Irvine office in a hooded sweatshirt stained with tobacco juice, fidgeting with a wire coat hanger and a couple of unopened pieces of nicotine gum, Steinberg says he tried for a long time to avoid bankruptcy because of a moral obligation he felt to pay his debts. But he says it ultimately was necessary.

Steinberg continues to tell his story publicly today in an episode of HBO's *Real Sports*.

There is some shame and embarrassment in all of these details coming out, he says. But the most important thing to him is his sobriety, and the hope that he can be of service to others.

"There are loads of people who luxuriate in the fall of the rich and famous," Steinberg says. "But I think the American people also love a comeback."

National Hockey League

Predators grant Poile an extension as GM

The Nashville Predators have extended the contract of David Poile, who has served as the franchise's only general manager since its inception 14 years ago.

Rink report

Predators chairman Tom Ci-



Standings

Atlantic		Eastern Conference		Central		Western Conference				
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GP	L	OT	Pts	GP	GA
N.Y. Rangers	57	38	14	5	81	161	116			
New Jersey	58	34	20	4	72	164	159			
Philadelphia	58	32	19	7	71	193	177			
Pittsburgh	59	33	21	5	71	184	160			
N.Y. Islanders	59	25	26	8	58	139	174			
Northeast		Northwest		Pacific		Stanley Cup				
Boston	57	35	20	2	72	190	132			
Ottawa	61	31	22	8	70	185	183			
Toronto	59	29	24	6	64	178	180			
Montreal	60	24	26	10	58	160	164			
Buffalo	59	25	27	7	57	148	175			
Southeast		Metropolitan		Western		Western				
Florida	58	27	20	11	65	144	162			
Winnipeg	58	29	24	5	64	153	170			
Washington	58	29	24	5	63	159	163			
Tampa Bay	58	26	26	6	58	163	195			
Carolina	59	22	26	11	55	153	181			
Central		Western Conference		Stanley Cup		Western Conference				
Detroit	60	41	17	2	84	190	139			
St. Louis	59	36	16	7	79	150	117			