

Star-struck

Gordie Howe among many ex-stars marketed by local man

John Warden may not be a household name to sports fans.

The former Detroit Tiger pitcher is by no means Paul Cartwright's most famous client. He is, however, one of the funniest.

"Every time I ask one of the Tigers, 'Who would be the most entertaining speaker?', I get the same answer— John Warden," says Cartwright.

Warden is one of the more than 100 former athletes— including 11 Hockey Hall-of-Famers— Cartwright represents through his Georgetown-based company Sports Celebrity Marketing, a venture he began with his wife Fay this year.

After 15 years in the food industry, Cartwright wanted to incorporate his love of sports into a new career. He knew former NHLer Dick Redmond and asked what type of opportunities would be available. After Cartwright quickly shot down the idea of becoming an agent, Redmond suggested marketing retired athletes.

"Everybody wants a big name," Cartwright said. "I try emphasizing someone that fits. It really depends what type of event they want them for."

When possible, Cartwright likes to sit down with his clients, find out their likes, dislikes and their personality types and book them accordingly. He said some are more suited to speaking engagements, others to golf tournaments, others to card signings.

Cartwright built a network of athletes through the players themselves and through team alumni associations. The list includes baseball players Mark Fidrych, John Hillier and Alan Trammell and hockey players such as Johnny Bower, Johnny Bucyk, Dennis Hull and Gordie Howe. In fact, Cartwright is the only person outside the Howe family authorized to line up appearances for "Mr. Hockey."

While today's athletes are instantly associated with million-dollar contracts, Cartwright said the majority of the players he represents played before that kind of money was bestowed on players.

"Not all of these guys are as well off as people say," said Cartwright, who enjoys helping them supplement their income.

Many former pro athletes continue to work. Willie Horton, a member of the 1968 World Series champion Detroit Tigers who hit 325 career homers, works for ORT Tool & Die Corporation as a national sales rep. Horton says having Cartwright's help allows him to manage his time and gives kids positive role models.

"Paul's not only good for Willie Horton, he's good in bringing people together so that they can have heroes again," said the five-time all-star from his home in Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

Cartwright is currently helping Horton develop a touring baseball clinic that would visit shopping malls and help teach young players the basic skills they need to play the game.

Sports Celebrity Marketing can be reached by e-mail at sportscm@idirect.com or by phone at 873-8405.

—By Herb Garbutt, staff writer

Paul Cartwright and his wife Fay began Sports Celebrity Marketing this year and already have more than 100 former athletes as clients.

Photo by Herb Garbutt

