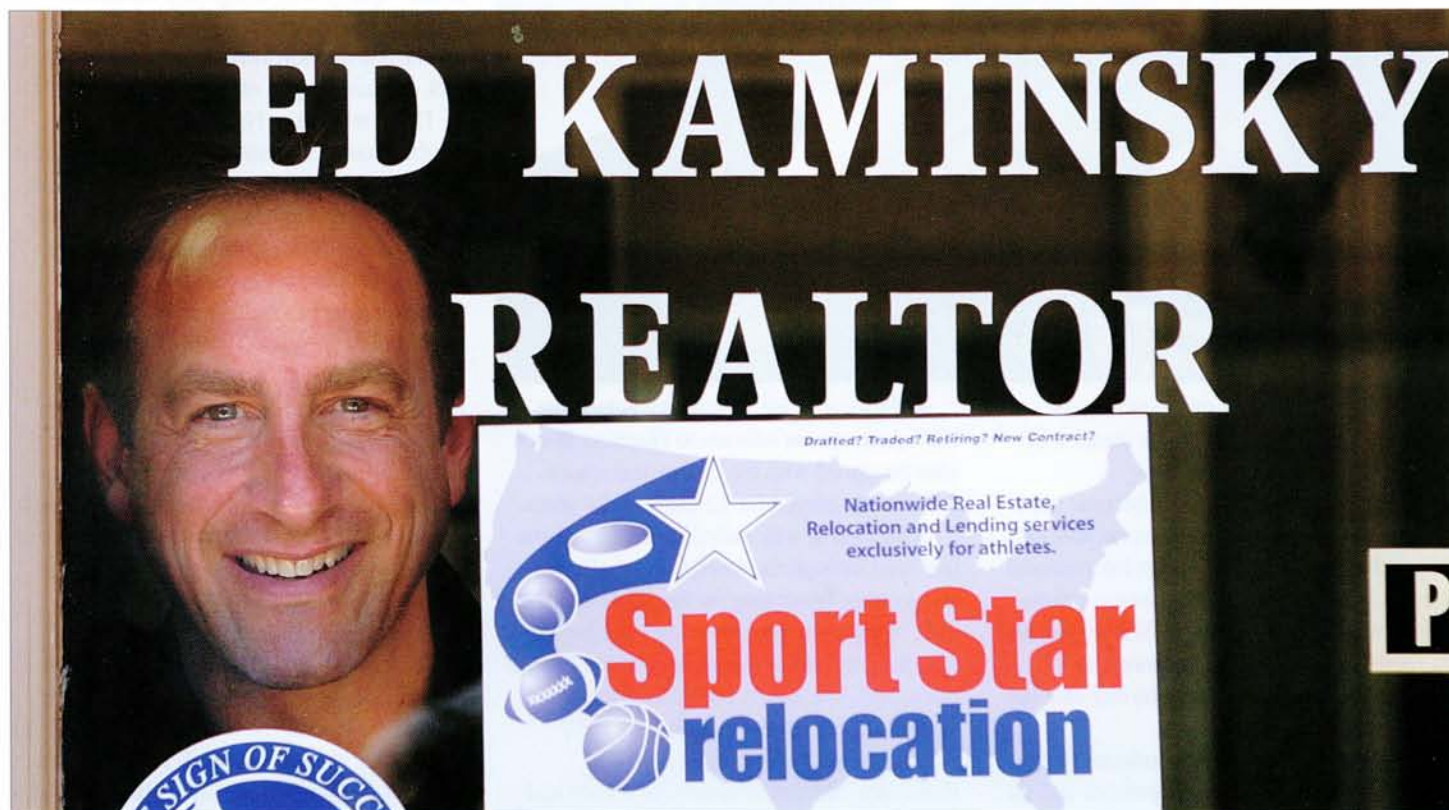


## NEWS & ANALYSIS



Ed Kaminsky: His company has expanded its client list to include about 50 professional athletes, including several L.A. Lakers. RINGO H.W. CHIU/LABJ

By **DANIEL MILLER**  
*Staff Reporter*

**F**OR many people, it's hard to sympathize with professional basketball or football players who make millions each year, even when they are traded to new teams, forcing them to uproot their families and relocate.

Ed Kaminsky understands that but also empathizes with the downside of athletes' careers — and is making a few bucks on it in the process.

The Manhattan Beach-based real estate professional is the head of **SportStar Relocation**, which helps professional athletes find homes and settle into new communities after they have been traded, drafted, or signed to new teams. Industry professionals say there is no other business in the country that offers this type of service.

"Often when these guys are drafted or traded they are left helpless," said Kaminsky, who founded the Manhattan Beach company two years ago. "A lot of teams aren't there for the

players, they treat them like stock and trade them off and leave them hanging."

After spending the last two years building a nationwide network of about 2,000 real estate agents, Kaminsky said his efforts are starting to pay dividends, with the company expanding its client list to include about 50 professional athletes. The affiliated agents typically work as residential real estate agents full time in their own cities but take and give referrals to Kaminsky's company.

Recently the company has worked with Los Angeles Lakers players Jim Jackson, Shammond Williams, and Aaron McKie; Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Carson Palmer; and Washington Redskins running back T.J. Duckett.

Its revenue is derived from regular real estate commissions — though they are large, given the often oversized homes athletes tend to buy with their oversized paychecks.

In addition to helping athletes find new homes and sell old houses, the company provides clients with a variety of other free serv-

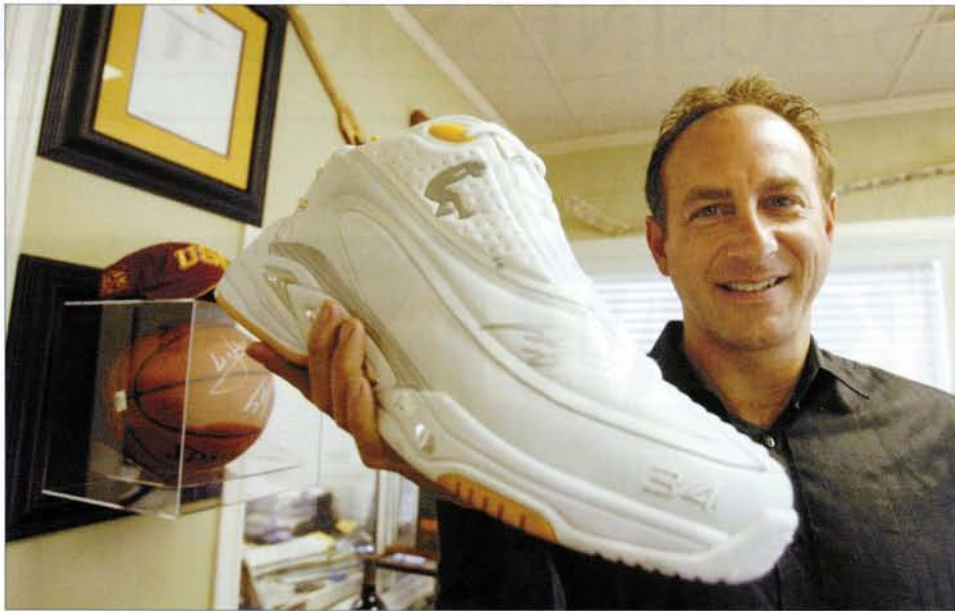
ices designed to make athletes' transitions into new environments easier. SportStar Relocation can set athletes up with chauffeurs, bodyguards, personal chefs, and nannies. The company can also help athletes with their moves to new areas by managing the transport of vehicles and furnishings.

Those tasks often are left to a team's director of player development to handle. Chip Schaefer, director of player development for the Los Angeles Lakers, has referred players to SportStar, among several other agencies that specialize in high-end homes.

"In professional sports there is a certain amount of upheaval when a trade is made or on the day of the draft a player finds out his new address and has to move his life 3,000 miles away," said Schaefer. "For people who have families and children, you like to have a knowledgeable resource in a city."

### **Airport close**

Kaminsky, who also owns ItzSold Residential Real Estate in Manhattan Beach,



## Ed Kaminsky helps traded athletes find digs in their new cities.

said that his 19 years of experience in the beach community facilitated the creation of his company.

In recent years, the city has become popular for local professional athletes because of its proximity to the Los Angeles International Airport, the practice facilities for the Lakers, Clippers and Kings in nearby El Segundo, and its relative closeness to downtown Los Angeles and Staples Center. The city also has a strong school system.

“(Athletes are) trying to combine the dynamic of where they work, practice and the airport,” Schaefer said. “I like to think of it as a triangle. You come in from a road trip at 3 a.m. and you don’t want to drive an hour to get home. And you want to drive a reasonable distance to games.”

Prior to forming the new company, Kaminsky worked with other athletes who relocated to Manhattan Beach. The city is home to such athletes as former Los Angeles Dodger Eric Karros, soccer player Landon Donovan, and several Kings players.

In Jackson’s case, Kaminsky helped the NBA journeyman relocate to Hermosa Beach after he signed with the Lakers last season. Jackson has played for 12 teams in 14 years.

“(Jackson’s) wife called, and said that she had been through the routine and that it has always been frustrating for them,” Kaminsky said. “I was so happy when she said that this was their smoothest transition. I found them a place, had groceries in the kitchen and the newspaper delivered when they arrived.”

In creating the SportsStar network, Kaminsky said that he interviewed each real estate agent the company wanted to work with to ensure that only discreet and highly professional brokers would be brought on board. (SportsStar takes a 35 percent cut of the commission on first-time transactions with agents in other cities, and a smaller cut thereafter.) But not everyone is convinced the business model has long-term viability.

“Basketball players like to spend big bucks on houses and Manhattan Beach is the center,” said Stephen Shapiro, chairman of Westside

Estate Agency Inc., a high-end residential brokerage. “(But) there is not enough business and upside on individual deals to make the lack of business pay off.”

Don’t tell that to Nancy Pulley, a Washington, D.C.-based real estate agent who began working for Kaminsky’s company last year. Pulley recently helped Redskin running back Duckett find a townhouse to lease on short notice after he was traded from the Atlanta Falcons to the Redskins in late August.

“Preseason was over with and (the Redskins) were ready to start the games and he needed to be up here,” Pulley said. “He couldn’t come and see what the market was like and lollygag, so I previewed everything I needed to show him. It was narrowed down to the three prime properties so he could choose.”

Another SportStar broker, Elizabeth Roberts, who is based near Boston, worked with current San Diego Padres relief pitcher Alan Embree when he left the Boston Red Sox to play for the New York Yankees. “We can help them move quickly without a lot of headaches for the family,” Roberts said.

Kaminsky said that close client-broker relationships and word-of-mouth response should help the business grow. Indeed that has already happened with the Lakers.

Schaefer said that while he often counsels new Lakers players on housing options when they seek his advice, the team has no formalized process to help its athletes find housing and other services. He called SportStar Relocation a “really original concept.”

[www.SportStarRelocation.com](http://www.SportStarRelocation.com)



[edK@SportStarRelocation.com](mailto:edK@SportStarRelocation.com)

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