

Weighed Down by Too Much Cash?

by Rick Reilly

Congrats, newly minted NBA rookie!

Now you've been drafted. Next comes the delicious multimillion-dollar contract. And that's when you must do what most NBA players do: start going through cash like Jack Black through the Keebler factory.

Filing for bankruptcy is a long-standing tradition for NBA players, 60% of whom, according to the *Toronto Star*, are broke five years after they retire. The other 40% deliver the *Toronto Star*.

It's not just NBA players who have the fiscal sense of the Taco Bell Chihuahua. All kinds of athletes wind up with nothing but lint in their pockets. And if everyone from Johnny Unitas to Sheryl Swoopes to Lawrence Taylor can do it, so can you! With my ***How to Go Bankrupt** DVD series**, it's a layup to go belly-up!

Ten essentials, just to get you started:

1. **Screw up, deny it, then fight by using every lawyer and dime you have.** Roger Clemens just sold his Bentley, reportedly to pay legal bills. Marion Jones lawyered herself broke before she finally copped and went to prison. Paging Mr. Bonds, Mr. Barry Bonds.
2. **Buy a house the size of Delaware.** Evander Holyfield was in danger of losing his 54,000-square-foot pad outside Atlanta, and it's a shame. He had almost visited all 109 rooms!
3. **Buy many, many cars.** Baseball slugger Jack Clark had 18 cars and owed money on 17 when he went broke. And don't get just boring Porsches and Mercedes. Go for Maybachs. They sell for as much as \$375,000—even though they look like Chrysler 300s—and nobody will ever know how to pronounce them, much less fix them.
4. **Buy a jet.** They burn money like the Pentagon. Do you realize it costs \$50,000 just to fix the windshield on one? Scottie Pippen borrowed \$4.375 million to buy some wings and spent God knows how much more for insurance, pilots and fuel. Finally, his wallet cried uncle. The courts say he still owes \$5 million, including interest. See you in coach, Scottie! (For that matter, why not a yacht? Latrell Sprewell kept his 70-foot Italian-made yacht tied up in storage until the bank repossessed it, in August 2007. He probably sat at home and cried about that—until the bank foreclosed on his house, this past May.)
5. **Spend stupid money on other really stupid stuff.** In going from \$300 million up to \$27 million down, Mike Tyson once spent \$9,180 in two months to care for his white tiger. That's why Iron Mike's picture is on our logo!
6. **Hire an agent who sniffs a lot and/or is constantly checking the scores on his BlackBerry.** Those are the kinds of guys who will suck up your dough like a street-sweeper. Ex-Knick Mark Jackson once had a business manager he thought he could trust. Turned out the guy was forging Jackson's signature on checks—an estimated \$2.6 million worth—to feed a gambling jones. "And it wasn't like I was a rookie—I was a veteran," Jackson says. The only reason he says he's getting some money back is because he didn't ...
7. **Sign over power of attorney.** What's it mean? Who cares? Just sign! The guy you're signing it over to knows. And while you play Xbox, he'll be buying large portions of Switzerland for himself. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar let an agent named Tom Collins have power of attorney once, and it cost Kareem \$9 million before he figured it out.
8. **Spend like the checks will never stop.** Also known as the Darren McCarty method. Despite earning \$2.1 million a year, Red Wing McCarty, who started a rock band called Grinder, went splat by investing in everything but fur socks (\$490,000 in unlikely-to-be-repaid loans) and gambling large (\$185,000 in casino markers). In other words, a Tuesday for John Daly.
9. **Just ball.** Don't write your own checks. Don't drive your own car. Don't raise your own kids. Just be a tall slab of skilled meat for others to feast on. Not to worry. It'll be over before you know it.
10. **Most of all, set up a huge support system around you.** It'll be years before you'll realize they call it a support system because you're the only one supporting it. They're all on full-ride scholarships at the University of You. "Guys go broke because they surround themselves with people who help them go broke," says ex-NBA center Danny Schayes, who now runs No Limits Investing in Phoenix. "I know all-time NBA, top-50 guys who sold their trophies to recover."

See, kid? You can be a top-50 guy!

So order my *How to Go Bankrupt* series now, and get this empty refrigerator box to sleep in, absolutely free!

*(Only \$1,449 plus shipping, handling, service fee, dealer prep and undercoating. Per month.)