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BUSINESS

Ex-Jet joins sports management firm



(STAFF PHOTOS: TANYA BREEN)

Former New York Jet Joe Klecko (front) and Peter Grandich, managing member of Trinity Financial Sports & Entertainment Management Co. LLC, talk about the company in the Wall office on Friday.

An investor's higher calling

BY ALEX BIESE
COASTALMONMOUTH BUREAU

WALL — As a stock broker, Peter Grandich saw his fortunes rise and fall. Now he is in the financial sports and entertainment management business, answering to a higher calling.

A Bronx native, Grandich, 51, of Manalapan, never finished high school and entered Wall Street in 1984 after starting an investors' club while working as a warehouse manager. That same year, he began publishing "The Grandich Letter," a financial newsletter which still runs today.

While working as vice president of investment strategy for the firm Philips, Appel and Walden in August 1987, through a combination of what he called "good fortune and guessing," Grandich predicted that year's stock market crash, a call which elevated him to a higher level in his profession.

He soon logged between 500 and 1,000 appearances on television and radio and by the mid-1990s he was living in a huge home in Millstone Township and owned five horses at Monmouth Park in Oceanport, two

race cars at Wall Speedway and was enjoying playing a lot of golf.

"I reached what I thought was the American dream," he said.

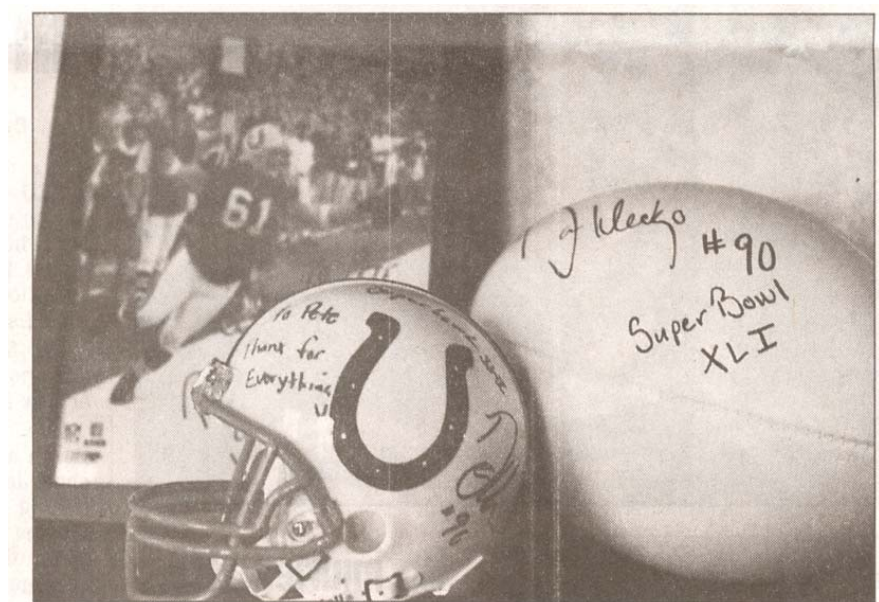
But the dream shattered in 1998, when the metals and mining market began to fall. Grandich, who was heavily invested in that market, suffered three major panic attacks, fell into a state of depression and by 1999 had losses in what he described as "seven figures."

"To me, life as I thought it should be was over and I thought I had blown it," he said.

Grandich, who has a wife, Mary, and a daughter, Tara, now 15, said before the turn of the millennium, he was a "C&E Catholic — Christmas and Easter." That began to change after his financial setback.

"Because I had nothing else to fall back on, I fell back on my faith," he said.

In June 2000, Grandich and his family moved to Manalapan and soon after he met Lee Rouson, who had played for the New York Giants when they

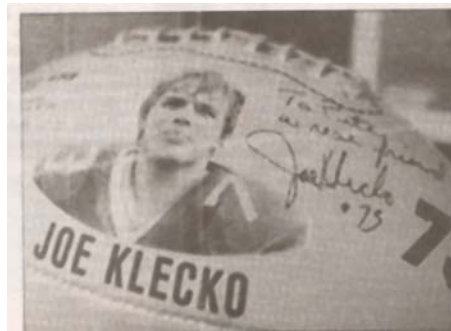


On display in Grandich's office (above) is signed sports memorabilia, including one of his prized items — a football signed by former New York Jets defensive lineman Joe Klecko (below), who is on the corporate advisory board of Trinity Financial, Sports and Entertainment Management Co., LLC, Grandich's financial management company.

won the Super Bowl in 1987 and 1991.

A diehard New York Jets fan, Grandich said he was surprised when Rouson approached him with the idea of starting a financial management company with Christian leanings for athletes.

"I used to root for you to drop the ball and die," Grandich said he told Rouson at the time.



Sometime after that, while attending a healing Mass at St. Veronica's Church in Howell six or seven years ago with former New York Giant Keith Elias, who said he first met Grandich in 1995, Grandich met the man he describes as his "all-time hero," former New York Jet Joe Klecko.

Klecko, who now lives in Colts Neck, played for the team in the 1970s and 1980s and was a part of the Jets' defensive line known as "The New York Sack Exchange."

In June 2001, with the help of Rouson, Klecko and Elias, who all joined his corporate advisory board, Grandich founded Trinity Financial, Sports and Entertainment Management Co., LLC. But he didn't use a conventional business plan.

"We believe the Bible is the greatest source of financial information," he said, adding that King Solomon was worth 1,000 Donald Trumps.

Grandich said that based on his experience with the sports world, which includes Bible study sessions with members of both the New York Giants and the New York Yankees, he has concluded that between one third and one half of all professional athletes are practicing Christians. He acknowledged that means Trinity loses many potential clients by not hiding the faith of the officers behind the firm.

"But that's OK," he said. "We are who we are."

Elias, a Lacey resident and a member of Trinity's corporate advisory board, said, "Athletes represent a very specific part of the population, where they make a lot of money over a very short period of time, but they have to make that money last."

He said Grandich provides the same service for athletes as he does for members of the general population who also seek out his financial assistance.

"You need somebody to come alongside you that has your best interests at heart, that isn't trying to make money off you but is trying to help you," he said.

Elias referred to Grandich as "a world-changer" for all of the community outreach work he does in the area.

"I obviously support everything Peter does," he said. "His mission, his goal, everything he's trying to accomplish."

Klecko, another member of Trinity's advisory board, said it is his role to "be a mentor if you can, be a shining light if you will."

Klecko, who speaks and makes appearances at churches and functions such as Pop Warner events and golf tournaments, said Trinity works "to open these doors for people to understand what's good for them without shoving it down their throat."

"We're stewards of our money. It's not our money," he said. "God has a plan for all of us."

As far as financial advice goes, Klecko said that these days, when it comes to things such as wills, insurance or investments, "I don't do without (Grandich.)"

Grandich said he keeps Trinity's client list confidential, even withholding the number of clients he has.

"We have more than one," he said.

When asked how the business, which moved from Millstone Township to Wall in July, has grown over the years, he said, "starting from zero, it's easy to grow."



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