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## Driver X: NASCAR's man behind the scenes

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In the most recent issue of The Mag, there was [a great column](#) by the NBA's Player X about this guy who seems to be in the middle of every deal that gets done in basketball, Wes Wesley.

We have one of those guys in NASCAR, too. His name is Cary Agajanian.

If you aren't a racer you probably don't know about the Agajanian (Ag-uh-jane-E-uhn) family. But there is no one -- and I mean no one -- in any form of motorsports who doesn't know the name. Hell, we know its history and its behind-the-scenes dominance within the sport.

The Agajanian family's racing roots go way back. They've owned short tracks, sprint car teams and a couple of Indy 500 teams. It was Cary's father who got it started, and now it's Cary who has become racing's version of Wes Wesley. Rarely does a deal get done without his being involved on some level, even if it's a phone call from a driver or team exec asking "Hey Cary, does this sound like a good move to you?"

For decades, Agajanian has been a mover and shaker in the sport, advising people on cutting sponsorship deals and working Indy's Gasoline Alley every May, helping drivers land rides. Then in the mid-1990s he did a very smart thing: He went to a young kid named [Tony Stewart](#) and offered to represent him formally as an agent.

The idea of a sports agent was a totally new concept in racing back then. It just didn't exist. Even today a lot of drivers still cut their own deals. Earnhardt always did. I have before. I think no matter how involved agents or management groups get in NASCAR, most deals still start with two guys talking in some dark corner of the garage, sealing it with a handshake. The number of people involved in racing is still relatively small. It's like a big high school, so one-on-one conversations mean a lot.

But back to Agajanian.

As you can imagine, the Stewart deal worked out pretty damn well. Soon after Stewart's career took off, Cary started formalizing a lot of his "advisor" deals and eventually formed Motorsports Management International, or MMI, the first (and still pretty much only) racing-specific sports agency. Now his company represents everyone from Stewart to [Kyle Busch](#) and [Kasey Kahne](#). They advise teams like Joe Gibbs Racing and run a scouting service for up-and-coming drivers. Even if you aren't an MMI client, you can't really do a deal in this sport without consulting with Cary Agajanian or MMI. If they don't represent one side of the table, they probably represent the other. And even if they don't, they have likely set a precedent or a market price through another deal they've done and it gets thrown onto the table as a starting point for a negotiation.

Cary is such a well-respected guy and he loves to talk racing so much that even non-clients know they can pull him aside if they see him walking down pit road and bounce an idea off of him. He does it because he's nice. But he's also no dummy. He knows that a high tide raises all boats, including his. You never know, he might be talking to a future client.

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