

Left to right:  
Dan Kessler,  
Aaron Flaker and  
Emmitt Tyler

LIGHTSPEED PHOTOS



# TOP Business LEADERS

**The Producers**

Aaron **FLAKER**  
Dan **KESSLER**  
Emmitt **TYLER**

On paper, The JAM Brands appear to be a mega-cheer corporation, especially after last year's steady growth in which owners Aaron Flaker, Dan Kessler and Emmitt Tyler sought out partnerships industry-wide, building their flagship JAMfest events company to include a dozen brands. This trio may have every corner of the all-star market covered, but to them, The JAM Brands is still rooted in the same philosophies that have always been a part of its core.

"It's important for us to be a positive force in the industry, and we definitely don't want to be seen as something negative just because we grew," says Flaker. "In general, the JAM Brands are partners in spirit."

The Louisville, KY-based

company, which launched as JAMfest in 1995, is known for hosting events that entertain the masses of athletes, coaches and parents who attend each year. It's true that you never know what to expect from this innovative team. This past season, The JAM Brands partnered with Nation's Leading Cheer Companies (NLCC) to produce the incredibly successful, The U.S. Finals, a series of end-of-season events created for all types and levels of cheerleaders and dancers, which culminated with a virtual webcast naming the U.S. champions in all divisions.

For the upcoming season, The JAM Brands has already announced plans to extend The U.S. Finals from four events to six and expand their GAME DAY School and Rec Championships after the inaugu-

## CLAIM TO FAME

*Owners of the JAM Brands*

ral event in March 2009 attracted 75 teams from four different states. "We're proud of our events because they're created around what parents, coaches and kids want, not what we want," Flaker

says. "We look forward to taking the GAME DAY concept and adding so much more. It's important for us to stay fresh and current and never let our events get stale."

—ERIN SKARDA

*"Aaron, Dan and Emmitt are each highly capable professionals who are passionate about our sport. They'd all be successful individually, but I believe what has made The JAM Brands a leader in our industry is their ability to utilize the synergies of their relationship. In other words, the team is even better than the sum of the individuals, which is the mark of a great team, whether it's in sports or business."*

—Jeff Fowlkes, CHEERSPORT executive

**Q: How do you feel The U.S. Finals played out this year?**

**AF:** It played out exactly how we imagined. We've gotten great feedback [on the results video webcasts]. We hit a homerun as far as the quality of the show.

**ET:** I feel like we outdid ourselves in regards to the production. I don't see how anyone could've walked away not thinking, "Wow, that was different than any event I've ever been to!"

**Q: Why did you partner up with the NLCC to produce this event?**

**DK:** In many people's opinions, Levels 1 to 4 are the most important divisions

in our industry. We felt a need to showcase the talents of all athletes.

**AF:** This was a trend that was being requested by our customers, so it was logical to get involved with it. We sped up the process by partnering with the NLCC, which already hosted Final Destination.

**Q: Do you plan on partnering with more companies this year?**

**AF:** Right now, we're integrating all the companies we've brought on board and trying to streamline and take advantage of those synergies.

**Q: Are you proud of the direction all-star cheer is headed in?**

**ET:** I'm not sure. Unfortunately it seems like we're in a decline. I think the appeal of all-star cheerleading has lost some of its luster, and I hope it rebounds.

**AF:** Right now there are some negative trends we all need to be aware of. The cost of being an all-star cheerleader is a concern. I think there will be kids who'll return to school or rec cheer due to economic terms. We're also not growing like we were, and that's alarming. Is it something we did as an industry, or are there just so many other options that we're competing with? We're competing outside of ourselves at this point. ★