

# Shamrock's Michael LaSalle: Finding balance in entertainment, media and sports investing

*From leading deals at Shamrock Capital to making gourmet pizza, Michael LaSalle tackles challenges with precision and calm.*

**Iris Dorbian**



Michael LaSalle, Shamrock Capital

Finding balance is an attitude that has shaped Michael LaSalle's personal and professional choices. Whether it's taking a gap year traveling the world following a demanding post-college job as an investment banker or encouraging his team at [Shamrock Capital](#) to recharge when needed, the Chicago native has made this idea a guiding force in his life.

"It may not mean you're spending 50 percent of your time on your professional and personal life," he clarified. "It's about finding balance at any particular moment. If you need a week, a day or a minute out of the white noise happening [around you], then you should take it. If you're out of balance personally versus professionally, your

professional work is going to suffer because you're not focused. You will miss something when you're looking at an investment.

“Avoid bias – embrace balance.”

This attitude has served LaSalle – who is the latest in our Dealmakers to Watch series – well in his career. It led to his current roles as partner and, [as of last July, a co-president](#) at the Los Angeles-based PE firm Shamrock Capital, where he works alongside co-president Andrew Howard. For some, sharing dual duties with another in the high-octane world of dealmaking could be a trying ordeal. Not for LaSalle, who relishes the challenge.

“Andy and I have worked together for 20 years,” said LaSalle. “He is an incredible partner and great human. We know each other’s superpowers and each other’s blind spots, and we have the rapport to support each other in anything.”

LaSalle’s private equity journey began 24 years ago. While studying for his MBA at UCLA, he realized he wanted to do two things: participate in deals and work with companies that interested him, specifically in the entertainment, media and sports sectors. Enter Shamrock Capital, a buyout shop that targets companies in those segments.

Through a UCLA venture fellowship that pairs students interested in private equity with alumni in the field, LaSalle connected to Shamrock’s Stephen Royer, who would become his mentor.

“He was leading the private equity effort at Shamrock,” recalled LaSalle, who holds an undergraduate degree in finance and economics from Notre Dame. “Steve wanted to build a private equity firm independent of [Shamrock’s origins as a Disney] family office and he wanted to help build a team to do that.”

Royer hired LaSalle as an intern and the rest was history.

“I tricked Steve that summer into thinking I was worthy of a full-time job,” he joked.

## **Day and night**

Since that eventful summer, LaSalle’s career path has been a meteoric rise. In 2010, he was named a partner and this past summer promoted to a co-president, while Royer, a former president and partner, became a chairman and partner.

Has the new role changed his daily responsibilities? “I like to say that my day job is to be a private equity investor. My night job is running the firm with Andy. So, on a day-to-day basis, I am still just one of the partners helping to drive private equity. That said, Andy and I are accountable and focused on thinking about Shamrock in 2030 and 2035, and making sure we are positioning it to achieve those goals.”

At Shamrock, LaSalle is a board director of several portfolio companies, among them [Boardwalk Pictures](#), an award-winning Hollywood production company, and Excel Sports Management, a New York City-based sports marketing and management firm whose client roster includes top athletes.

He has also worked on scores of memorable deals. One that left a lasting impression on him was FanDuel, the New York City-based online fantasy gambling company that Shamrock backed during a critical period for the business.

“We initially invested in 2014,” recounted LaSalle. “Basically, that deal had many twists and turns as the daily fantasy business began to grow in a hypercompetitive market. It had regulatory issues that caused real pain to that industry. That business required working with the company to figure out how to support them through really tough times. We exited out of that several years ago. It was very hard work and a great partnership with all of the stakeholders.”

When he's not spearheading deals, LaSalle, who is of Italian heritage, likes to make gourmet pizza for his family and friends, a hobby he described as his "Zen."

In fact, he's so serious about this endeavor that he even trained at a local school chapter whose flagship campus is in Naples to get certified in this culinary specialty.

"I learned how to make homemade mozzarella, how to work the pizza oven," he said. "I must have made 70 to 80 pizzas over three days. I even got graded."

So the next time you're in LA and your taste buds are hankering for a margherita pizza, you know who to call.