Neil Kraetsch
• assistant general counsel
• Oakland A’s, MLB
• San Jose Earthquakes, MLS

Jill Bodensteiner
• associate athletics director in charge of NCAA compliance and legal affairs
• University of Notre Dame

Fred Hanser
• co-owner and former vice chairman
• St. Louis Cardinals, MLB

Steve Johnston
• general counsel
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Working in the high-profile world of sports is a dream job for many sports fans. Among lawyers, the rarefied opportunity to work behind the scenes—contracts, negotiations, general counsel, and management—in an industry that entertains millions is a coveted position. The following section looks at several Washington University School of Law alumni who put their legal backgrounds to use tackling challenging issues in the sports industry.

**In the Field:**

- **Michael Principe**
  - Managing director
  - Blue Entertainment Sports Television
  - JD '95

- **Irwin Raij**
  - Partner
  - Foley & Lardner LLP
  - JD '95

- **Steve Weinreich**
  - Vice president and general counsel
  - Phoenix Coyotes, NHL
  - JD '96
As associate athletics director in charge of NCAA compliance and legal affairs, Jill Bodensteiner, JD ’94, is a key player in the storied University of Notre Dame athletics program.

**THE JOB** is part fun, part work for the former basketball player who sandwiched Notre Dame undergraduate and MBA degrees around her law degree.

“I try to go to every home game of my eight to 10 favorite sports,” she says. “It may be a favorite because I have a special relationship with the coach or because I enjoy watching that sport. I would say I go to a minimum of three events a week.”

Although not directly involved in the recent hiring of football coach Brian Kelly, Bodensteiner often has a major role in coach employment contracts.

“Our athletics director primarily handles the interview and selection of the candidate,” Bodensteiner says. “But there are human relations and legal implications.

“We have a contract starting point, but of course they come back with 20 questions,” she continues. “I’m involved in answering those questions, negotiating the sticky points.”

Bodensteiner notes that coaches’ contracts are “a specialized form of employment contracts, particularly with respect to liquidated damages provisions addressing a coach’s departure and the effect of NCAA violations or other misconduct on the coach’s employment. Basically we would want to state that if the coach violates NCAA rules, it would allow us to get out of the contract without paying.”

In the legal affairs part of her job, Bodensteiner is immersed in contracts. In addition to employment agreements for head coaches and assistant coaches, she also negotiates game contracts with football opponents, and agreements covering television, radio, and merchandising rights.

Ironically Bodensteiner did little contract work with Bryan Cave LLP in St. Louis and Phoenix; Seyfarth Shaw in Chicago; or in 12 years as senior counsel at Notre Dame. She moved from senior counsel to the athletic department’s compliance officer last July.

“I’ve learned to enjoy contract work,” Bodensteiner says, “in large part because I get to use my MBA and engage in

“When you know your client through and through, it’s a lot easier to negotiate.”

—JILL BODENSTEINER
strategic thinking. Plus I get to use my legal background.

“What helps me first and foremost is a thorough understanding of the university and our mission and goals,” she continues. “When you know your client through and through, it’s a lot easier to negotiate. Number two is attention to detail. I’m really thorough. And number three is negotiation skills.”

In the other part of her job, ensuring that the department complies with NCAA rules, Bodensteiner says, “I have to be on top of the recruiting process and every aspect of the student-athlete experience. That includes admissions, academic eligibility, and financial aid—and what student athletes eat, where they live, and how we use them in promotions.” She also checks the background of sports agents who want to represent Notre Dame athletes.

Last fall, she and her staff advised Notre Dame’s star quarterback Jimmy Clausen and wide receiver Golden Tate, both juniors, as they considered jumping to the National Football League.

“If they do anything that crosses the NCAA’s line,” Bodensteiner says, “if they hire an agent, if they don’t pay for any benefits they get while testing the water, any of these things could make them ineligible to come back to Notre Dame as seniors the next year.”

Clausen and Tate eventually left Notre Dame for the NFL.

Bodensteiner also serves as administrator of the women’s basketball team. She takes on administrative duties of the program so that the coaches focus on coaching. Bodensteiner travels with the team and tries to attend two to three practices a week.

“I loved playing basketball most because of the camaraderie among the players,” she says. “I really missed that when I wasn’t part of the team. So now I have that back, and I’m getting paid to be part of it.”

Fred Hanser, center with World Series trophy, and family members

**Baseball Legacy**

by Gary Libman

The St. Louis Cardinals are in Fred Hanser’s blood. His great-grandfather, Adolph Diez, was a part owner of the team from 1917 to 1947. As a boy, Hanser, JD ’66, would play baseball on Sunday mornings and then walk four blocks to see the Cardinals play at Sportsman’s Park.

**Hanser Recalls** watching about 25 games a year from the family’s seats next to the Cardinals dugout where he had a prime view. “The players would come over next to our seats and pick...
out their bats from a rack along the wall in front of us, so you’d see them right up close,” he says.

Hanser’s love of the game continued through law school and his 30 years at the St. Louis firms of Fordyce and Mayne and then Armstrong Teasdale LLP. Then in 1996, Hanser had the opportunity to continue the family legacy: he initiated the formation of an investor group, which purchased the Cardinals.

“When we concluded the purchase, the feeling was pretty much like having your children be born,” he recalls. “It was a very big high. Then we won the World Series in 2006, which was also one of the greatest thrills you could feel.”

Ownership has provided Hanser with a direct way to be involved in professional baseball and to be a major figure in the Cardinals management. For the past 14 years, he has served on the Cardinals three-member board of managers—the first seven as the Cardinals chairman and the last seven as vice chairman. On January 1, 2010 he stepped down from day-to-day involvement with the club, but continues with oversight responsibility of the team as one of three managers, headed by Bill DeWitt, Jr., chairman, and including Drew Baur.

In all these roles, Hanser has used his legal background extensively. When his group bought the team, he oversaw the legal work for the purchase. When the Cardinals and the former Montreal Expos built a joint spring training complex, he worked on land-use and lease contracts with the city of Jupiter and Palm Beach County, Florida. He also tackled issues related to the construction contracts, parking and other land-use considerations, and the property’s development.

When the Cardinals bought two minor league teams, he did the primary work on one purchase contract and reviewed the drafting of the second. He also oversaw a myriad of contracts, including construction, labor, financing, and city and county agreements when the Cardinals built a new ballpark in downtown St. Louis.

The group initially spent a lot of time trying to secure state-supported financing for the stadium, but this effort ultimately failed. Instead, Hanser says, “We issued bonds for $200.5 million. Adding other loans and property contributions, we invested $375 million. We ended up having the largest private investment in a baseball stadium of any team.”

Over the years, Hanser also has made sure that the Cardinals understood and followed legal provisions developed by Major League Baseball (MLB). These have involved sponsorships, labor issues, trademark licensing enforcement, and lawsuit support, he says. The provisions also covered a new revenue sharing plan and luxury tax involving all 30 MLB teams.

Although Hanser felt passion for his work, and knows past and present Cardinals greats such as Stan Musial and Albert Pujols, being a team owner also has had its challenges.

“It’s like operating a business under a glass,” he says. “Everybody who’s watching or paying attention has a better idea how to do it than you do. Especially the baseball side of it: who you sign and who you trade.

“This was especially true when we were trying to get public financing for the ballpark. You have to become a little thick-skinned,” he continues. “It’s interesting because that’s really also what you want. You want people to be interested in your team, to have feelings and opinions. That’s what being a fan is about.”
JOHNSTON AND KRAETSCH have turned their love of baseball and their knowledge of contract law into a winning combination. As the Oakland A’s general counsel and assistant general counsel, respectively, the two work out of the Oracle Arena offices, about 50 feet from the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum where the A’s play.

Kraetsch easily identifies the most enjoyable part of his job: “Day games,” he says. “My favorite thing is going over to the ballpark, grabbing a hot dog for lunch, and watching a few innings before heading back to my office.”

The Coliseum offers all kinds of perks. Johnston, Kraetsch, and their co-workers annually play a softball game in the Oakland A’s home stadium. Johnston also has been known to throw ground balls in the empty stadium to his three sons, Ty, 7, Brady, 5, and Will, 3. During spring training last year, Johnston, a former Grinnell College baseball captain, even took swings during the A’s batting practice.

When not enjoying these unique benefits of the job, Johnston and Kraetsch focus on contracts. Since joining the A’s in 2006, Johnston has been responsible for every contract the A’s sign. These include agreements with media partners, sponsors, and concessionaires, and others that cover spring training in Phoenix.

“Negotiation skills are key,” Johnston says. “Our goal is to prevent any possible problem that would inhibit our fans from enjoying the game. We always keep a watchful eye toward enhancing the fans’ experience while also protecting our organization from unreasonable legal and business risks.”

Kraetsch joined the A’s in 2007. He focuses in large part on agreements with team sponsors, such as radio and billboard advertisers, and day-to-day management of legal issues.

The two also draft player contracts for A’s General Manager Billy Beane.

“The deals that we handle are with veteran players we’ve signed as free agents, or players in our system who we are re-signing to long-term deals,” Kraetsch says.
Kraetsch and Johnston also address issues such as performance incentives, no-trade clauses, and liability issues. For example, they negotiate language relating to the player who injures himself doing something dangerous, such as bungee jumping, and is unable to play. In those cases, the athlete may forfeit his contract.

The pair provides similar legal services for another of A’s owner Lewis Wolff’s, MBA ’61, teams—the San Jose Earthquakes. The Major League Soccer (MLS) team joined the league as an expansion club in 2008. But Johnston and Kraetsch don’t handle soccer players’ contracts, which are coordinated through MLS rather than the individual teams.

“I really enjoy our involvement with the Earthquakes, and we are working hard to make them a competitive and fun team to watch,” states Johnston. “Our fans are great, and now it’s up to us to give them a great team.”

“One of the most appealing parts of my job,” Kraetsch says, “is the broad range of issues I face. Every day when I come in, I don’t know what’s going to be on my desk. We get exposure to a whole variety of issues and departments with varying needs and personalities. It’s nice to feel like I’m a part of helping this organization be successful.”

Kraetsch says his legal education helps as he labors among the comparatively few attorneys representing professional sports teams. “What you take out of law school is how to declutter your thought process and critically analyze issues,” he says. “You learn how to step in and manage a messy situation and create a cost-efficient, workable solution, hopefully very quickly. There isn’t any area of life where that wouldn’t come in handy.”

Both men reached the A’s after love affairs with baseball since childhood.

“I don’t remember ever not being a baseball fan,” says Kraetsch, who grew up in St. Louis and played baseball in high school. He also attended a lot of St. Louis Cardinals games as a kid, and continued as an avid fan through college at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign and during law school.

After law school, Kraetsch worked in Chicago and lived about a block from Wrigley Field, where he also frequently attended games. “Being from St. Louis, I couldn’t root for the Cubs. I just liked going to the games,” he recalls.

On the other hand, Johnston, who grew up in Davenport, Iowa, and played baseball in college, loved the Cubs. As a boy he was an avid collector of baseball cards and ingested statistics about Davenport’s minor league Cubs affiliate. Although not originally an A’s fan, Johnston and his uncle attended a 1982 A’s game in Seattle where Johnston scored autographs from several A’s players, including legendary manager Billy Martin and Hall of Famer Rickey Henderson.

“I still have the paper that all the players signed,” he says, as he pulls the sheet, protected by a plastic cover, from a shelf behind his office desk.

Johnston and Kraetsch met in law school, where Johnston was editor-in-chief of the Washington University Law Quarterly. But a strong friendship developed between the baseball aficionados when they began careers at separate Chicago law firms.

By 2003, Johnston had moved to Beam Global Spirits & Wine Inc. in Chicago, which makes Jim Beam bourbon. As senior counsel, he managed domestic and international compliance and regulatory matters, as well as negotiated contracts...
“love of the deal” spurred Michael Principe, JD ’95, into a leading role in sports and entertainment management.

**PRINCIPE, BASED IN** New York City, is the managing director of Blue Entertainment Sports Television (BEST). The firm represents athletes, broadcasters, and entertainers, as well as produces and sells sports- and entertainment-themed television programs and events.

BEST’s roster of more than 225 clients includes basketball’s Magic Johnson, Shawn Marion, and Jason Terry; 2009 Super Bowl XLIII MVP Plaxico Burress, and professional baseball players, including Kendrys Morales of the Los Angeles Angels, and the 2010 World Series MVP Matt Holliday of the St. Louis Cardinals.

With offices in New York City, Los Angeles, and London, BEST has a broad client list, including rights holders such as the National Football League, National Basketball Association, and the National Hockey League; league partners such as the NBA, NFL, and NHL; marketing and representation clients such as the A’s, the San Francisco 49ers, and the Los Angeles Dodgers; and advertisers including Nabisco, Lebron James’s Tailgate Select, and the Coca-Cola Company.

**On the Ball**

**by Gary Libman**

by Gary Libman

with distribution companies, marketing firms, and advertising agencies.

A colleague who had worked for the A’s told Johnston about an opening for the general counsel position, and he jumped at the opportunity.

When the A’s were contemplating building a 36,000- to 40,000-seat stadium in the Bay Area, Johnston thought of Kraetsch. Working for the Chicago firm of Leo & Weber PC, Kraetsch represented surety companies that had issued bonds on large construction projects. Johnston hired his friend, and the two became an unusual duo—graduates of the same law school working for the same major league team.

The A’s are now waiting for Major League Baseball’s permission to move the franchise to San Jose, California. If baseball approves the move, Johnston and Kraetsch will add the tasks of negotiating contracts with construction companies, labor unions, and the city of San Jose to their ever-growing list of responsibilities.

Johnston says he still marvels at where he ended up. He recalls the rainy, opening night game in 2006 not long after he had joined the A’s legal department.

“As President Mike Crowley was going to check out the field to see how damp it was and asked if I wanted to tag along,” Johnston recalls. “We walked out in front of a packed stadium. I tried to sound professional when I said, ‘Yeah, the field seems OK.’ But when Mike looked away, I had a huge grin on my face.

“You grow up thinking, ‘Wouldn’t it be fun to play pro baseball?’” Johnston continues. “And then, years later, you’re out on the field, closer than you ever expected to be to the game, watching pro athletes play a game you love.”

Looking around the Coliseum, he adds: “This is not a bad office right here, huh?”
Bowl MVP Santonio Holmes of the Pittsburgh Steelers; and this year’s 2,000-yard rusher Chris Johnson of the Tennessee Titans. Also heading the client list are Mike and Bob Bryan, the world’s No. 1 ranked doubles team; Caroline Wozniacki and Victoria Azarenka, the youngest women ranked in the Women’s Tennis Association’s (WTA’s) top 10; boxer Floyd Mayweather; and ESPN anchor John Saunders.

Media and event packages include those for the U.S. Open Tennis Championship, the French Open Tennis Championship, and the U.S. Open Series Legg Mason Tennis Classic, as well as numerous U.S.-based ATP tournaments, the Boston Marathon, the Superstars Competition, and participatory, grassroots sports tours: Hoop It Up, Kick It, and Let It Fly.

“We operate as a full-service sports and entertainment marketing, management, and production company,” Principe says. “The sweet spot, however, comes when we can produce content involving our clients.”

Last December, for example, BEST created an exhibition featuring clients Melanie Oudin and John Isner, both of whom were coming off great runs in the U.S. Open. As Oudin is a Georgia native and Isner is a University of Georgia alumnus, BEST held the event at the University of Georgia to a packed house.

“Creating an event with two hometown heroes made a lot of sense,” Principe says. “It raises our clients’ profile, increases their fan base, and allows them to not only keep in shape, but also earn additional income during the tennis off-season.”

Principe says creating events for clients goes beyond a former multimedia byword, “synergy,” to “interconnectivity.”

“If you have a collection of companies under one roof,” he says, “they must add value to their sister companies. In a roll-up, you’re just acquiring companies, putting them in a box, and whatever happens, happens. But with BEST, we are aggregating companies, ensuring that the pieces are ‘interconnected,’ which means that they mutually support

and drive revenue to each other, with the end result of enhancing value to both our clients and ourselves.”

Principe previously worked for then mega-sports agency, SFX Sports Group. During his seven years there, he served in a number of roles, including general counsel and executive vice president. He specialized in mergers and acquisitions for the sports properties, but also handled all aspects of the day-to-day legal work and acquired a detailed, behind-the-scenes view of how the company operated.

In 2006, after Principe was recruited by Louisville-based and highly successful entrepreneur Jonathan Blue, he went straight to work building a new sports agency. In whirlwind fashion, the company acquired 10 sports and entertainment businesses in 30 months. The acquisitions included the businesses of pro basketball, football, and tennis agencies, as well as college agents and entertainment managers, participatory sports tours, and multifaceted television and events groups.

The deals Principe participated in at SFX and BEST, he says, were “valued in excess of $500 million.”

While he has learned a great deal about the sports and entertainment business at both companies, he says he carries with him valuable lessons from law school, where he was a Robert and Mary Welborn Scholar. “Sports business is all based on contracts,” he says, “whether it’s to put a player on a team or a negotiation between an entertainment property and a sponsor.”

–MICHAEL PRINCIPE

“The reasoning and negotiation skills I learned in law school are critical,” he says. “And the risk assessment skills help me determine the best course of action to keep us out of any hot water.”
Irwin P. Raij, JD ‘95, has spent most of the last six years developing public–private partnerships—but not the kind most identified with the nation’s capital.

He has worked on the sale of Major League Baseball (MLB) franchises, negotiated deals to build two MLB stadiums, with a third in the works, and tackled a variety of issues related to the operation and construction of sports facilities.

Raij estimates that about three-quarters of his time is spent on pro sports and on his work as vice chairman of the firm’s Sports Industry Team. The rest is on legal matters that come his way as a member of the Government & Public Policy and Real Estate Practice teams. Raij previously served as as-

“In the last six years that I’ve been working on baseball, I think I love it more every year—the nuances of the game, the characters.”

—IRWIN RAU
sistant counsel to the Gore/Lieberman presidential campaign, as an attorney in the White House Offices of Counsel to the President and to the Vice President, and as an attorney for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

His work in sports taps into a lifelong interest. “I grew up loving and playing baseball, but I also played football and basketball,” Raij says. “In the last six years that I’ve been working on baseball, I think I love it more every year—the nuances of the game, the characters.”

Bringing baseball back to Washington, D.C., three decades after the Senators relocated and became the Texas Rangers, was Raij’s first extensive involvement as a sports attorney. Raij represented Major League Baseball’s relocation committee in its efforts related to the Montreal Expos, which were moved and renamed the Washington Nationals. During the process, Raij assisted with the evaluation of proposals from multiple cities and eventual negotiations with the finalists. This work included negotiating and drafting the baseball stadium agreement, the new stadium lease, interim stadium lease, and the new stadium construction administration agreement.

After the team moved to Washington, D.C., he was asked by MLB to do most of the team’s legal work for day-to-day operations, including sponsorships and concessions agreements. After the sale of the team to the Lerner family, Raij continued to represent the team on matters related to the construction of the new facility and its opening.

From the middle of 2004 through the end of 2008, Raij was involved every working day on issues involving the Nationals. Though the team has since hired in-house counsel, Raij still does special projects.

But there was more for him to do on baseball stadiums. At a lunch in New York to celebrate the results in Washington, D.C., the president and COO of MLB, Bob DuPuy, tapped Raij to facilitate the negotiation and approval of a new stadium for the Florida Marlins. Considering the history of previous negotiations, Raij viewed the stadium project in Miami Dade County as a major challenge. However, as a Miami Beach native son, the assignment held a particular hometown appeal.

“I was working on the Nationals Park and the Marlins ballpark at the same time. That was fun,” he says. “I was stretched at times. Blackberrys and cell phones are amazing things.”

Raij was able to celebrate twice when Nationals Park opened for play in 2008 and a year later, as ground was broken for the new Marlins stadium, which is scheduled for completion in 2012.

A third baseball stadium project is now commanding Raij’s attention. In spring 2009, Commissioner Bud Selig named him to a three-person committee charged with investigating the feasibility of constructing a new park for the Oakland A’s in northern California.

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Steve Weinreich, JD ’96, works where Coyotes play. He’s vice president and general counsel of the Phoenix Coyotes of the National Hockey League and the Jobing.com Arena.

**WEINREICH BEGAN** trying to crack the specialized world of sports attorneys a decade ago. He quit an unsatisfying job writing leveraged leasing of aircraft contracts and conducted a meticulous, eight-month search for a sports law job.

After the search, he joined a start-up sports representation and marketing company. A year later, in 2003, he landed a position with the Coyotes.

“I was always passionate about sports and intrigued by the business,” he says. “The things that drew me to it were the passion, the people, and the energy you find in sports. You rarely find people in this industry who are unhappy with their jobs or unhappy in general. You can make a lot more money in private practice, but people in this business love what they do.”

It also didn’t hurt that he had the opportunity to work with the National Hockey League’s all-time leading scorer, Wayne Gretzky, before he resigned as the team’s coach in 2009.

Weinreich’s work with the Coyotes focuses on contracts. The team signs legal agreements with sponsors, concessionaires, and merchandisers. The organization also requires agreements with fans who rent suites to view games and promoters who put on shows.

“Britney Spears comes in to play our building, I do the contract,” says Weinreich.

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**Power Player**

**by Gary Libman**
a case of a guest being struck by a puck or if someone trips and falls in the concourse and files a lawsuit.”

Weinreich also assisted when the team filed for bankruptcy in 2009. Eventually, the court approved the National Hockey League’s purchase of the franchise. Weinreich furnished documents and other information requested by the owner and bidders for the team, but otherwise tried to remain neutral.

“We weren’t trying to steer the process one way or the other,” he says.

The types of contracts Weinreich negotiated before entering sports law differ from those he oversees today. When he wrote the earlier leveraged leasing of aircraft contracts at two Chicago firms, the contracts often required 200–250 pages of finely tuned details.

“With the Coyotes, most of the contracts I draft and review are probably 25 pages or less,” he says.

“That has a lot do with the fact that lots of entities you’re dealing with are being run by business or financial people, not attorneys.”

Although he focuses on contracts, Weinreich says he’s never bored. “You never have two days that are the same,” he says, “and you’re always one call away from your day doing a complete 180-degree turn.”

Another attraction of the job is that Weinreich and his co-workers can skate or play hockey in the team arena on nights when it’s not in use.

Weinreich also got to spend time with Gretzky on team road trips.

“He’s an unbelievably nice man,” Weinreich says. “When I met him, I was a little in awe. But he makes you feel very welcome.

“On a road trip, you try not to make waves or stand out. But he came up and introduced himself. Here’s a guy who’s met millions of people and probably appreciates his privacy. He didn’t have to take the time to get to know me.”