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# A gathering Storm in the world of sports management



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Letting go

SOUTHFIELD - Storm Kirschenbaum smelled the sweat and tasted the blood at an early age. Only a portion of it was autobiographical.

His father is Stuart Kirschenbaum, the highly respected former boxing commissioner in Michigan.

Stuart Kirschenbaum also served as a fight judge for out-of-town bouts. He was acting in that capacity when Hector "Macho" Camacho was confronting a hometown product at Madison Square Garden.

"People in the crowd thought the hometown guy had won. My dad's card gave Camacho the decision. They

were shouting all kinds of things at my dad. They had to have guards around us as we walked out,” recalled Storm.

### The Greatest

Stuart Kirschenbaum’s unique position allowed his son to make eye contact with the sometimes tragic end result of athletic fame.

Storm was with his father when they visited Muhammad Ali at the boxing champion’s home in Berrien Springs some years ago.

The mists of Ali’s brutal profession had long since settled on the great champion. He spoke in quiet whispers. His thoughts were often padlock by synapses which refused to fire after way too many clenched fists.

His hands shook, too.

A glove autographed by Ali sits behind Storm Kirschenbaum’s desk at his office.

That glove serves as a reminder of greatness and often, its costs.

### Best friends

Storm Kirschenbaum is an attorney. He went to law school at the University of Detroit. He is president of Metis Sports Management in Southfield. His area of expertise is focused. He works with professional athletes.

Most of the time they are football and baseball players. Among his clients are Weston Dacus of the Kansas City Chiefs, Kyle Clement of the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Washington Nationals’ Roger Bernadina.

“Metis is a full-service sports agency. Basically, we represent athletes. We negotiate contracts. We negotiate marketing and endorsement deals. We are their lifeline to everything outside the arena. If they want to buy a car, they call us. If they want to buy a house, they call us. If they have a legal problem, they call us. We are their fathers, their brothers, their mentors, and their best friends,” he said.

### Center ice

Kirschenbaum was an outstanding youth hockey player. He played at the highest level through his teenage years. Among his teammates were Mike York, who now plays for the Columbus Blue Jackets and Matt Elich, who played for Tampa Bay and the Detroit Vipers.

But Storm Kirschenbaum had a hankering for baseball. After spending just one full season playing high school baseball as a senior at Birmingham Groves, he was talented enough to be named a newspaper’s Player of the Year.

He was also picked to participate in the prestigious East-West High School All-Star game at Tiger Stadium.

“The morning after the high school all-star game, my dad and I drove down to Gainesville. I had to go to summer school at the University of Florida, and I played fall ball. The team consisted of guys like David Eckstein (former World Series MVP with St. Louis), Mark Ellis (Oakland A’s), Brad Wilkerson (Red Sox) and Josh Fogg (Reds). There were like eight or nine guys on that team who are still playing in the major leagues. There were like 55 or 60 kids on the team. I was in over my head. I mean, I had only played one year of high

school baseball,” said Storm Kirschenbaum.

Bum knee

He lasted about a year and a half at Florida. He left and eventually landed at C.W. Post where gushing adjectives followed him. He was the transfer from Florida! That sentence always concluded with an exclamation mark. But Kirschenbaum busted up a knee goofing around playing football with some of his teammates on the baseball team during Thanksgiving break. Ripped cartilage tore a hole in his dreams.

That tear allowed the light of recognition to come in.

“I came back, but it was never the same. Baseball did not mean that much to me anymore. The last game of my senior season we were playing North Carolina. They had a very tall left-handed pitcher who had the nastiest slider I had ever seen.

He was a junior and he was eligible for the draft, and he struck me out with that slider. After the game as we were shaking hands I told him I was thinking about representing him in the draft. I wanted to be his agent. He just laughed,” said Storm Kirschenbaum, laughing at himself in recollection.

Short-lived

That is exactly what Storm Kirschenbaum is these days. He’s got high profile clients, but he is fully aware that profile is short-lived. Don’t let all of the garnishments supplied by Fox or ESPN or Topps or Fleer fool you. There’s an expiration date stamped on all professional athletes, and it is always on the near horizon.

Screwing around at C.W. Post. Taking a hit at Arrowhead Stadium. Shredding a rotator cuff on the mound at Fenway. Getting whacked around by Ken Norton and Joe Frazier.

Sport is high risk, high reward.

“The biggest problem a professional athlete has is knowing when to give it up,” Storm Kirschenbaum said.

His office is adorned in vintage photos. There is a Jerry Maguire poster, too. It is sports memorabilia, but it is not the recollection of someone who pines for the arena lights himself.

“There are a lot of bad agents out there,” said Kirschenbaum. “There are people who will say anything or do anything just to get a client.”

Storm Kirschenbaum is in the ring now. He’s fighting for his clients.

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