



Storm Kirschenbaum, 32, has grown his business and become one of the few successful sports agents in Michigan.

Kirschenbaum has right pitch to be successful sports agent

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According to cliché, 'When one door closes, another opens.' Even when that's true, it's rare for that second door to open immediately after the first one closes. But that's literally what happened with Storm Kirschenbaum — minus the actual doors, that is.

Only minutes after playing in his final college baseball game, the Birmingham Groves graduate, who'd had "an inkling" that he'd like to become a sports agent, made his first pitch — to the pitcher who'd just struck him out "three or four times" that day with "the nastiest slider."

Knowing the hurler was a draft prospect, Kirschenbaum recalls, "I walked up to him as we were shaking hands and said, 'I want to represent you for the draft.' The guy looked at me like I was crazy. So I didn't get

him. But that was kind of the first taste of the agent life."

Before long, Kirschenbaum was both a law school student at U-D Mercy and a working sports agent. At first he represented several of his baseball friends, none of whom made it big. But the associations helped Kirschenbaum recruit other ballplayers.

"I just told them, 'Hey, I'm a law school guy trying to learn the business. Give me a chance. If you don't like me, you can always fire me.'"

"Every single one stuck with me. And I built some clients up through law school. I had maybe 12 guys; they were in the minor leagues. And it was good experience. They don't teach you that in law school, how to be an agent. There's no class."

By 2007 Kirschenbaum opened his own firm, Metis Sports Management, which recently moved from Southfield to downtown

Birmingham.

At one time — before the athletics door closed — it seemed possible that Kirschenbaum would need an agent. A high-level youth hockey player with Compuware and Little Caesars, he turned to baseball as a Groves senior.

Kirschenbaum made the most of his only season of high school baseball, earning all-state honors plus a scholarship to the University of Florida in 1996.

Kirschenbaum describes his college baseball career as "bizarre." It included several injuries, a transfer from Florida and two years of action for Long Island University/C.W. Post, where he earned the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference Merit Medal for athletic and academic achievement as a senior.

His background in athletics — which includes a close association

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with boxing courtesy of his father, former state boxing commissioner and fight judge Stuart Kirschenbaum — helps the 32-year-old speak his clients' language.

Maintaining a rapport with those clients is vital to his success, because an agent's job is much more personal than is commonly known.

"A lot of people assume that (his job is) high-profile," Kirschenbaum says. "It's so exciting; you're dealing with the big contracts and you get to go to clubhouses and things like that.

"The reality is that your

everyday job is not that exciting. We deal a lot with problems. We deal with family matters. Guys get in trouble and go to jail. We've got to deal with that.

"If they're buying a house, we're involved. It's as full service as you get. You really deal with every aspect of their life.

"You've got to sometimes teach these kids how to write a check. You're not only the agent, you're their family advisor, you're their attorney, you're their brother, their father. You're everything to these guys and they lean on you for everything.

"I've had kids call me at three in the morning, saying their cell phone broke. 'What do I do?' It's like the end of the world's happened."

Kirschenbaum's agency rep-



Storm Kirschenbaum (right) is pictured with Nick Hersh, his business partner at Metis Sports Management, and client Roger Bernadina (middle), an outfielder with the Washington Nationals baseball team.

resents about 70 pro baseball and football players. While his client base is mainly young, he does represent some Major League and NFL athletes.

Among the clients Kirschenbaum is most excited about is Washington Nationals outfielder Roger Bernadina, who's hitting close to .300 in

his first full big league season. Kirschenbaum's minor league clients include Tigers draftee Kevan Hess, who had a 3.24 ERA and one save for the Class A Connecticut Tigers through July 8.

While mega-agents such as Drew Rosenhaus and Scott Boras have offices in the more

glamorous locales of Miami and metro Los Angeles, respectively, Kirschenbaum hopes to be one of the few successful Michigan-based agents.

"We're as big as they get in the state," he says. "There's not a lot of us. There's been a lot of people that have tried and failed. And I like to think that we've lasted the longest, us and the Postons (brothers Carl and Kevin)."

Kirschenbaum is currently working on recruiting college football players, who can talk but not yet sign with agents after their junior years.

"The recruiting is 24 hours a day," he says. "It never stops. We do that 365 days a year."

Kirschenbaum estimates he's spoken with about 100 players who are 2011 NFL draft prospects. He won't sign them all, of course. But now, at least, recruits don't look at him like he's crazy.