

# Major Marketing at the Minors

Lawyers do 'color commentary' and are a surprise big hit!

By Micah Buchdahl

**W**hen it comes to marketing, law firms are frequently exorted to "think outside the box." But Wilmington, Del.'s Young, Conaway, Stargatt & Taylor decided to step *inside* the box. As in baseball, as in the press box.

Wilmington is the home of the Blue Rocks — the Kansas City Royals' Carolina League minor league affiliate. This last season, when you tuned into the Blue Rocks radio network during the third inning of the team's home games, you heard an unlikely color commentator: an attorney from Young, Conaway.

The important role of the attorney: to provide a crisp, articulate rendition of the official baseball disclaimer. It may not carry quite the cachet of singing the National Anthem, but it's a decided hit with the fans, the team, and the firm.

"Minor league baseball is about having fun," says Chris Parise, the team's director of sales and marketing. "Everybody wants to do something fresh and different, and the idea of having real lawyers reading the legalese was cool."

"This was a first in pro sports broadcasting," says Steve Lenox, the official play-by-play voice of the Blue Rocks, who always takes an opportunity to grill the attorneys to the delight of listeners.

"Some broadcasters might get a little concerned about having a heavy-hitting attorney pay you a visit each night, but I learned a lot about the Young Conaway lawyers and what the practice of law is like. They were always good sports, never knowing what I was going to ask about on any given evening."

With 90 attorneys in practice areas that include bankruptcy, corporate,

banking, tax and employment, personal injury and worker's compensation litigation, this gambit became a business development exercise that everybody — from a first-year associate to senior partner — enjoys. Attorneys picked a date on the baseball schedule to take a turn in the broadcast booth. With the "disclaimer language" duties came four box seats and a parking pass.

Lenox was given the lawyer's name, position and practice area. On-air banter ranged from the game itself, to what law school and lawyering is like, to upcoming nuptials, families, hobbies and home towns. Fans, family and friends around the globe could listen in via a live Web feed or on local radio.

"This was not a law firm sponsoring the disclaimer or running a commercial," says firm administrator Tom Ralston. Other firms had taken that traditional route, he said.

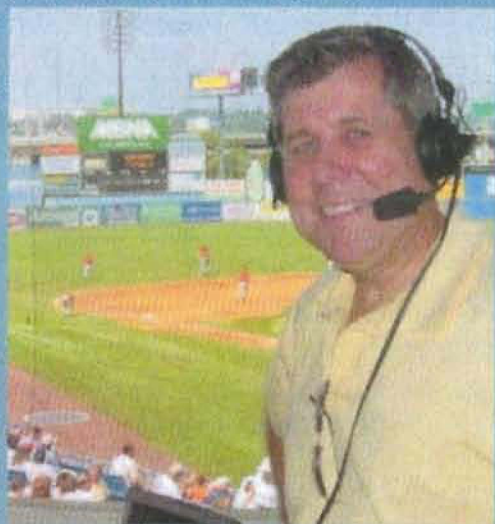
But thanks to Lenox, listeners got to know the firm and the practice sections, and the conversations helped make his broadcast, as well as the firm, unique, observed Ralston.

"You never really knew what Steve was going to ask about on a given night," says associate Jennifer Noel, a baseball aficionado who can toggle seamlessly between a nuanced discussion of Delaware's tax code and the history of the Blue Rocks' nickname.

## Season Highlights

Among the 2003 season highlights:

- A bilingual disclaimer (Spanish and



**Tony Flynn's official script:** "This broadcast is authorized by the Wilmington Blue Rocks baseball club solely for the entertainment of our listening audience. Any publication, rebroadcast, retransmission or other use of the descriptions and accounts of this game without the express written consent of the Wilmington Blue Rocks is strictly prohibited."

English) by associate Vivian Medinilla.

- Partner Rick DiLiberto's "Final Four" N.C.A.A. basketball picks.
- Bankruptcy associate Joseph Barry and Lenox trading stories about growing up in the same part of New York state.
- Partner Tony Flynn, well known for his environmental and insurance coverage work, talking about his book on famous baseball trades.

"The pace of baseball made it easy to intersperse the game action, disclaimer language and a myriad of topics in a fun half-inning," says Ralston.

Indeed, what was originally conceived as just a fun marketing gimmick turned into a big hit. It gave Young Conaway a chance to support the community's only pro sports franchise, do a little advertising and branding, give the attorneys some media training through off-the-cuff interviews, and give clients and prospective clients a chance to learn a little more about the person behind the lawyer. Most of all, it was a nice excuse on a summer evening to take the family or a few clients out to the ball game. **LFI**

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