

The Business Monthly

The Business Newspaper of Howard & Anne Arundel Counties and BWI Business District



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Joe Geier Knows About Being a Good Sport

Twenty years ago, Joe Geier decided to join his love for baseball with his ambition to become a financial adviser. As a Howard County native and graduate of the University of Maryland, it was important for him to do so locally.

His career in the financial industry began as an auditor for Standard Federal Savings and Loan, a small institution located in Gaithersburg. But soon after, he began working at the Baltimore-based sports management firm Shapiro, Robinson & Associates, where he supervised the accounts of professional athletes and ultimately developed the ambition to start his own firm.

He founded Geier Financial Group in 1990, at first providing accounting services for small businesses and high net worth individuals. But his thoughts kept returning to the sports industry.

"I was fortunate enough to have maintained relationships with people in the sports world [who] referred the first athlete clients to my company," said Geier.



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Getting Into the Swing

Geier hadn't been in business long when a 26-year-old pitcher for the Baltimore Orioles, Jeff Ballard, contacted him for help. Ballard was tearing up the mound and making a great name for himself in the pitching rotation, but was overwhelmed and a bit intimidated when it came to buying a house. He sought out the advice of someone he could trust.

A friend referred him to Geier, and the two quickly realized it was the start of a mutually beneficial long-term relationship. Geier steered Ballard through the home buying process, and not long after began handling Ballard's taxes, investments and other financial matters. Now, almost 20 years later, Ballard is still a client and long-time friend of the firm.

It quickly became known in the sports world that Geier was adept at navigating the financial issues professional athletes must deal with. Shortly thereafter, he began working with clients such as Steve Finley, Armando Benitez, Melvin Mora and Maryland native and New York Yankee Mark Teixeira.

In 2003, Geier purchased the financial services division of Shapiro, Robinson & Associates and was reunited with former colleague Brian Woods, who is now a partner with the firm. This acquisition doubled the firm's assets under management.

Geier and his team have developed strategies on behalf of their athlete clients to focus on issues unique to the profession, including how to structure an athlete's finances to compensate for his short career span and unpredictable income; how to position an athlete for a second career after his active playing days have ended; how to work through a divorce, financially and emotionally; how to limit excessive and impulsive spending; how to avoid becoming a bank to his family and friends; how to sift through the complex tax and estate issues; and how to help the athlete manage his overall lifestyle. By managing all of these issues, Geier has, in fact, become the "utility man" for his professional athlete clients.

Adding to the Lineup

As the client list grew, Geier won the respect of his clients with his knowledge of the financial and sports industries and his down-to-earth approach to building and nurturing relationships. The company expanded to provide comprehensive financial services to its growing clientele and now includes 16 employees and six departments devoted to serving high net worth individuals, including 45 retired athletes and 20 active players. Geier Financial Group has been included in Financial Advisor's list of top advisory firms for several years.

Today, Geier Financial Group is composed of three divisions: Geier Financial

Management Inc. (GFM), Geier Mules & Associates P.A., and Geier Asset Management Inc. GFM is the affiliate sports management firm, specializing in meeting the unique needs of professional athletes. It has developed valuable experience in helping professional athletes gain a competitive advantage with regard to their finances.

GFM operates as a family office, providing services such as daily money management, bill pay, assistance with buying/selling/refinancing houses and vehicles, and obtaining loans for active and retired professional athletes.

Proven Track Record

While Geier Financial Group has grown tremendously since its inception, its philosophy, firm values and "Geier Way" have remained unchanged. The "client first" attitude and "whatever it takes" philosophy have been largely responsible for the firm's success. Geier points to its proven track record for performing above its benchmarks in various market climates and creating solutions that span the financial spectrum.

Although Geier has garnered national attention, Geier Financial Group is located in Howard County and remains dedicated to the Howard County community. The firm is actively involved with several local causes, including the Ulman Cancer Fund for Young Adults; The Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation; and the Brooks Robinson All-Star High School Game.

"Professional sports is a very demanding, competitive and stressful industry. It gives these guys peace of mind knowing that their financial lives are in good hands. Being the main resource for them is a huge honor that I take very seriously," said Geier.