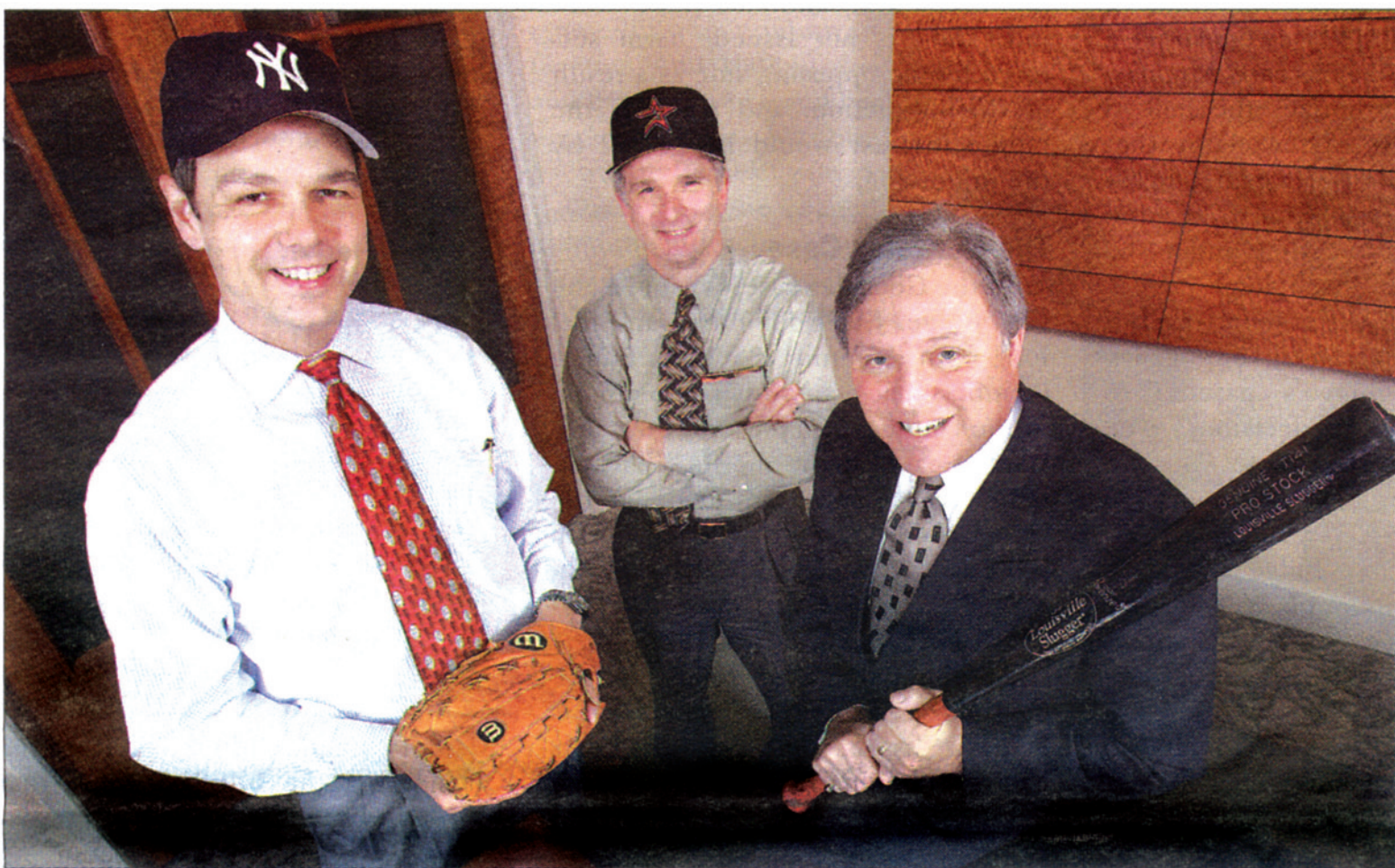


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From left, David P. Thatcher and Richard Walleshauser, both of Chamberlain, Hrdika, White and Williams, join Vincent R. Lauria in preparing for the Atlanta Mens Senior Baseball league season.

Only Pinstripes These Yanks Wear Are in Suits

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David P. Thatcher's golf game has suffered over the past year, ever since he started playing baseball in the Atlanta Men's Senior Baseball

In the TRENCHES

League.

Thatcher, a business litigator at Chamberlain Hrdlicka White Williams & Martin, is starting his

second season for the Yankees—the Atlanta Yankees, that is.

The league kicks off its season April 3. Games are every Sunday for 18 weeks, except for holidays—a schedule that allows

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Power to Question Tops Summit on Juries

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Thatcher no time for golf.

His teammate, Vincent R. "Vinny" Lauria, a solo plaintiff's lawyer, has played for the Yankees since the team was started in 1991. The player who started the team was from the Bronx, thus the name.

Lauria, who plays catcher and outfield, also grew up in the Bronx, just three miles from Yankee Stadium. During his childhood in the 1950s the Bronx was "the center of the universe in baseball" he said.

The league has given him a chance to play the game of his youth, he said. Until the MSBL got started in Atlanta in 1988, softball was the only game in town. "It's been great for us guys who never thought we would throw a hardball again in our lives," he said.

The league has been popular. When Lauria started with the Yankees in 1991, there were only five teams in the league for men 38 and up.

Now there are 25—15 in the 38-plus league and an additional 10 in the newer 48-plus league, started by players who'd outgrown the younger league.

Fifteen years later, Lauria, 57, still plays on the same team he started on, as do many others in the league. Richard Walleshauser, 50, also has postponed



Robert J. Grey, Jr.

moving to the 48-plus league. By day he's the marketing and recruiting director for Chamberlain Hrdlicka. On Sunday afternoons, he's the catcher for the Astros. He's been on the team since he was 42.

"A lot of us don't want to go up to the 48's. We want to stay with the guys we've been with. This league is about camaraderie—and getting to be a little kid again," he said.

Walleshauser recruited Thatcher, 39, to the league last year.

"David is a young sprout," Lauria said.

Several other lawyers have also played in the league for years. Walleshauser's Astros teammate Brian G. Corgan, also a catcher, is a litigator for Kilpatrick Stockton by day.

Robert A. "Bob" Bartlett, Mitchell D. "Mitch" Durham, Donald M. "Don" Etheridge, Michael R. "Mike" Funderburk, Mark V. Spix and L. Lin Wood are also veteran players.

Baseball prompts many questions about rules and regulations, said Walleshauser—the kind of questions that lawyers are trained to resolve. He said the

league's lawyers have held many leadership positions over the years.

Lauria called the lawyers' disproportionate role in running the league "more than a coincidence." The other players rely on their judgment, he said, adding that "the non-lawyers think we want to run everything."

Lauria has managed the Yankees for 11 years. He's also been the league's president and headed the rules and legal committee for several years.

The lawyers' skills are useful in adjudicating disputes, which, according to Lauria, are frequent. "Even though we're older people, we don't always maintain decorum," he said.

He said players have been suspended and even kicked out of the league. Protests also have been filed.

"We've had fisticuffs occasionally, but not often," he said.

Players have been suspended for profanity, throwing equipment, yelling at the umpire, and aggressive play on the bases. Lauria said the lawyers are better at accepting the umpires' decisions than the non-lawyers, because of their professional experience accepting verdicts from judges.

"I keep telling these guys who are grouching and yelling at the umpire that he's not going to change. If he calls a

strike, it's a strike," he said.

The umpire's calls of safe, out, ball or strike are all judgment calls, which, because they're factual issues, are non-appealable, he explained.

On the other hand, an umpire's interpretation of the rules is appealable. "Sometimes a protest will be upheld because the umpire applied the law wrongly," he said.

Lauria, like his teammate Thatcher, has put his golf game on hold for the duration of his baseball career. "I play golf, but so irregularly that I don't consider what I do playing golf," he said. "Until my days are over in baseball, there's no golf for me."

Tryouts have already been held for the Sunday MSBL league. Tryouts for a Saturday league will be April 23 and opening day will be May 14. A mid-week league is also starting in April. E-mail Don Etheridge at DEtheridge@wcsr.com.