

# SEATTLE'S OWN

Local franchise owners have come in all stripes, from duplicitous out-of-towners to benevolent local billionaires. Here's a capsule look:

## MARINERS



**1977-81**  
**Danny Kaye**  
The Hollywood entertainer lent name recognition to the Mariners' first ownership group. But the Original Six – Kaye, along with local businessmen Les Smith, Walter Schoenfeld, Jim Stillwell, Stan Golub and Jim Walsh – lacked the resources to compete. After bleeding red ink for five losing seasons, they sold the club to Orange County developer George Argyros for \$13 million.



**1981-89**  
**George Argyros**  
Argyros promised a cash infusion, but soon started whining about small-market inequalities. Eventually, he stripped the franchise bare, fielding a team with an \$8 million payroll in 1989. His only stipulation upon selling in 1990 was that the buyer keep the team in Seattle. He found an eager buyer in Indianapolis media mogul Jeff Smulyan, who paid \$77 million.



**1989-92**  
**Jeff Smulyan**  
He was seen as a franchise savior after Argyros, a young, confident owner who marketed the team with flair. Behind the scenes, he plotted to move the team to St. Petersburg, Fla. The Mariners finished with their first winning record in 1991. The following spring, after losing about \$20 million in 2 1/2 years, Smulyan sold to The Baseball Club of Seattle for \$105 million.



**1992-present**  
**Howard Lincoln**  
A group of local high-tech entrepreneurs kicked in \$50 million and got another \$75 million from Japanese businessman Hiroshi Yamauchi to ensure the team's survival. With Nintendo executive Lincoln calling the shots, the club hired Lou Piniella and flexed its muscle to create legislation that provided \$372 million in tax money for the most expensive park ever built. Forbes magazine estimates the team's current value at \$373 million.

## SONICS



**1967-83**  
**Sam Schulman**  
The Southern California show-business entrepreneur and partner Eugene Klein paid a \$1.75 million expansion fee to bring major league sports to Seattle in 1967. During Schulman's tenure, the Sonics hired Bill Russell, pirated Spencer Haywood from the ABA, set attendance records at the Kingdome and won a world championship in 1979. He was among the first owners to experiment with pay-per-view cable. After 15 seasons, he sold to Barry Ackerley for \$22 million.



**1983-2001**  
**Barry Ackerley**  
The outdoor-advertising and media mogul took over in 1983, rebuilt the team under coach George Karl and executive Bob Whitsitt, and eventually reached the NBA Finals in 1996. After backing out of a private arena deal, he took the team to Tacoma while the Coliseum was rebuilt into KeyArena with \$74 million in city-backed bonds. He claimed losses of about \$17 million in his final two seasons before selling the team last year.



**2001-present**  
**Howard Schultz**  
The Starbucks chairman gathered up local high-tech executives and other friends, associates and basketball aficionados to purchase the Sonics, the Storm and Full House Sports & Entertainment for \$200 million. Schultz, who owns 42 percent of the club, held community forums, met with fans before games and cut ticket prices in his first year of ownership as attendance declined to 90 percent of capacity.

## SEAHAWKS



**1976-88**  
**John Nordstrom**  
The department-store family headed a local group that paid \$16 million for the expansion team in 1974. The upstart Seahawks became the darlings of the NFL, ranked sixth in attendance in their first season and soon became annual playoff contenders. The team played at the publicly funded Kingdome, built for \$67 million. The Nordstrom group surprised the community in 1988 when it sold the team to Bay Area developer Ken Behring for \$99 million.



**1988-96**  
**Ken Behring**  
Burdened by the team's Kingdome lease and irked that the Mariners had received support for a new stadium, Behring and partner Ken Hofmann moved club operations to Anaheim, Calif., in 1996. The NFL soon interceded, forcing Behring and Hofmann to return to Seattle and offer the team to local buyers. Behring owned the Seahawks for eight seasons, sold them to Paul Allen for \$200 million and left as one of the most despised figures in Seattle sports history.



**1996-present**  
**Paul Allen**  
The Microsoft co-founder bought the team to keep it from moving – but only after state voters agreed to contribute \$300 million to a \$425 million stadium and exhibition complex to replace the Kingdome. Allen, who will pay the balance, spent \$4.2 million for the costs of the election, about \$5.5 million more on the campaign, and has suffered operating losses of more than \$16 million the past two seasons while the team played in temporary quarters at Husky Stadium.