



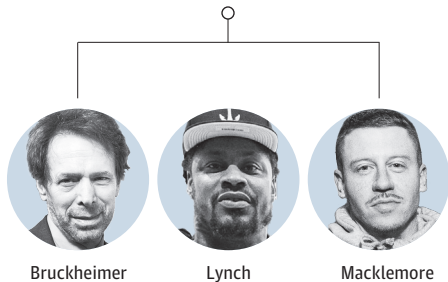
Red carpet takes the field

Seattle pro sports teams have welcomed celebrity owners with open arms. Below is a breakdown of some of Seattle's A-list owners.

NHL

Seattle Kraken

The ownership group includes film producer Jerry Bruckheimer, retired Seahawks star Marshawn Lynch and Grammy winner Macklemore.



Bruckheimer

Lynch

Macklemore

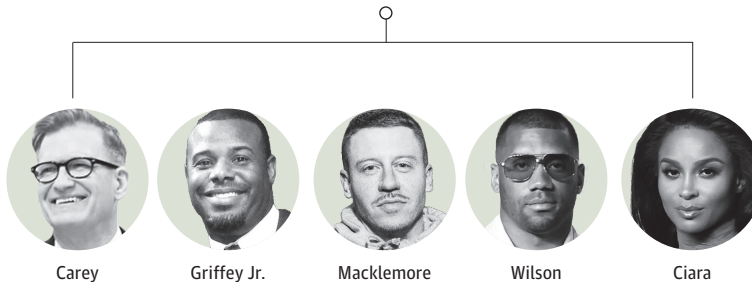
OVERVIEW

The late David Bonderman was the majority owner before his death last December. His daughter, Samantha Holloway, is now owner and chair of the Seattle Kraken executive Committee. The team's ownership also includes team CEO Tod Leiweke, Amazon CEO Andy Jassy, Ted and Chris Ackerley and Adrian Hanauer.

MLS

Seattle Sounders

The ownership group consists of TV star and comedian Drew Carey, Mariners great Ken Griffey Jr. and his wife, Melissa. Macklemore, Russell Wilson and Ciara are also part of the Sounders ownership.



Carey

Griffey Jr.

Macklemore

Wilson

Ciara

OVERVIEW

Beyond majority owner Adrian Hanauer, the Sounders' ownership group includes Tod Leiweke, his wife, Tara; Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella; Truveda CEO Terry Myerson; Madrona Managing Director Soma Somasegar and former Amazon AWS CEO Adam Selipsky.

WNBA

Seattle Storm

Legend Sue Bird joined the ownership group of her former team in 2024.



Bird

OVERVIEW

Force 10 Hoops LLC bought the Storm in 2008. The group includes former Microsoft executives Dawn Trudeau and Lisa Brummel, as well as entrepreneur Ginny Gilder.

MLB

Seattle Mariners

Baseball Hall of Famer Ken Griffey Jr. joined the team's ownership group in 2021.



Griffey Jr.

OVERVIEW

The Mariners are owned by First Avenue Entertainment LLLP, with John Stanton as chairman and CEO. Nintendo of America, the previous majority owner, still owns a 10% stake.

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fine. It's passed down generations. I think with these new ownership groups, there's an opportunity for diversification."

'If Ken Griffey is a fan ...'

Ryan Harnetiaux is the managing partner of Aequus Sports, the ownership group behind USL Spokane, which has 12 investors, including Alonso. Last year, the group launched Spokane Zephyr FC, a women's team in the USL Super League, and Spokane Velocity FC, a men's team in the USL League One.

Keenan, who has held senior roles with the NFL and the Cleveland Browns, says high-profile owners can broaden a fan base and bring extra media attention to the team. That was part of Alonso's appeal for Harnetiaux, who runs Aequus Sports with his wife and the club president, Katie.

"It shows you that somebody who's been around the game for 15 years as a professional at the highest level has taken an interest in what you're doing," Harnetiaux says. "Ozzie played against (Lionel) Messi

and some of the best players in the world along the way in his journey, so he has so much experience he can bestow."

Bob Stanley, the CEO of the sports- and media-focused merchant bank CAA Evolution, says it's helpful to have relevant names with ties to the area where a team plays. Strategic investors usually want to be meaningfully involved, not just cheerleaders.

"I believe for it to work well, there's a real engagement with the partner. They feel like they're part of it. Their ideas are listened to," Stanley says. "Just like any LP or any investor, they're part of the process."

No team in Seattle has embraced the celebrity owner more than the Sounders, with backing from Ken Griffey Jr., Drew Carey, Macklemore, Russell Wilson and Ciara.

"If Ken Griffey is a fan and an interested owner in the Sounders, then I want to be," says Ashley Fosberg, the club's chief impact and fan engagement officer. "He's such a local hero that he'll always have that relevance to Seattle fans."

A celebrity owner's role is often more strategic and opportunistic than formulaic.

Griffey, for example, was front and center during the team draw for the 2025 Club World Cup, which will feature six matches at Lumen Field, including three group-stage matches for the Sounders. International soccer governing body FIFA held the draw in Miami. Griffey, who lives near where the draw was held, made the trip to represent the team.

"Me and Ken got to know each other because we got there early," says Sounders and Reign Chief Revenue Officer Courtney Carter. "He's so great. He's hilarious. And he really cares about this city. He drove two hours as a part owner to represent us."

Drew Carey, meanwhile, is responsible for a fundamental aspect of Sounders management. As Fosberg tells it, Carey wanted an aspect of Sounders management to involve fans. It reflects a popular model overseas that allows fans to vote on important club matters, including leadership positions.

Upon Carey's suggestion, season ticket holders with multiple match packages join what is called the Alliance. Members can vote on the general manager about every four years, but Fosberg says the Alliance needs

30%

The low-end amount a general partner puts forth for a primary stake in an ownership group, according to Bob Stanley, CEO of CAA Evolution

40% participation for it to count. Members can also run for the Alliance Council and act as a go-between for fans, ownership and the front office.

'Keep valuations going up'

Once upon a time, owning a sports franchise was the hallmark of a billionaire's bucket list. The rise of celebrity ownership, however, reflects a new reality.

Although most teams have a majority owner or a point person, ownership is usually bifurcated, and it's getting more complicated with new debt rules and private equity involvement. Plus, opaque ownership stakes with many names spread across the ownership group can make it hard to know who exactly owns what.

Part of the complication stems from the escalating valuations attached to major professional sports teams.

The least valuable NFL team, the Cincinnati Bengals, was worth \$4.1 billion in Forbes' 2024 ranking. The Dallas Cowboys topped the rankings at \$10.1 billion.

The average NBA team is worth \$4.6 billion, according to a recent