



## Many Hats, One Lawyer

### Richard Karelitz

“When I come to the office I never know what I’m going to be working on or which company I’ll be working for,” said Richard Karelitz (’74). That’s because Karelitz wears a dizzying number of hats. He’s the general counsel for the New England Patriots National Football League team, the New England Revolution Major League Soccer team, Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts, the paper trading company International Forest Products, and the packaging maker Carmel Container Systems, all of which are members of the Kraft Group.

Fortunately, he has only one boss: Robert Kraft, the entrepreneur who owns and operates these businesses. It’s an exciting time to be working for the Kraft Group, with the Patriots having just won their third Super Bowl in four years, and their second in a row. “We all work as a team, from the players and coaches on the field to the employees in the back office,” Karelitz said. He credits this teamwork, along with being highly organized and disciplined, for his ability to manage the legal affairs of five successful business ventures.

Karelitz never planned for a career in sports, entertainment, and paper trading. “When I was at BUSL, I intended to specialize in taxation or finance,” Karelitz said. “That’s why I continued on at BUSL to earn my LL.M. in taxation.” But fate soon intervened.

In his first position after law school, he worked in the tax department of Coopers and Lybrand (now PricewaterhouseCoopers). In 1975, a year into the job, he was assigned to handle the finances for a new client—a startup paper trading company—which had sought the firm’s services because it had recently lost its treasurer. The company was International Forest Products (IFP) and the owner was Robert Kraft. Kraft liked Karelitz and offered him a job as comptroller. “The rest is history,” Karelitz said. He has worked with Kraft since, rising in rank as IFP grew into a multinational company and became one of the top 100 U.S. exporters.

In 1989, Kraft bought Foxboro Stadium—where the New England Patriots played—out of bankruptcy. In 1994, Kraft acquired the New England Patriots team itself, and in 1996 acquired the New England Revolution franchise.

After scouting for a site for a much-needed new stadium, the Kraft Group struck an agreement with the Commonwealth of

Massachusetts. In 2002, it opened the new, privately financed Gillette Stadium on the same property—on time, under budget, and with no substantial litigation, Karelitz noted.

Karelitz played a leading legal role in all of these transactions, while also assisting in the complex process of designing and building the new stadium. Karelitz radiates pride in his accomplishments. “It’s like watching children grow,” he said.

When Karelitz isn’t minding the legal shop for the Patriots, he’s managing the day-to-day contractual matters for Gillette Stadium, which hosts concerts and private functions year-round. On any given business day, he may also be handling legal matters around international financing, foreign currency, banking and shipping risks, and negotiating contracts with paper suppliers for IFP. He also oversees five in-house lawyers and is responsible for hiring outside legal counsel when necessary.

For most people, this might seem daunting. For Richard Karelitz, it’s all in a day’s work.



*At the recent Silver Shingle Awards ceremony, Richard Karelitz (left) presented Maureen A. O’Rourke, Dean ad interim, with her own personalized Patriots’ jersey.*