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ATHLETES WEALTH PLAYBOOK VETERAN EDITION FREE

*For the Active Mid-Career Pro
An extract from The Athletes Wealth Playbook*

THE SECOND CONTRACT PLAYBOOK

*Year-4 to year-10 active pro
Read it on a flight in 30 minutes*

FREE KEEP IT SHARE WITH ANY VETERAN PRO

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WELCOME

Read this on a flight

A 30-minute reset for the year-4 to year-10 active pro.

You don't need the rookie talk. You've been in the league. You know jock tax exists. You've signed something. You've negotiated something. You've watched at least one teammate make a decision he later regretted, and you've probably made one of those yourself.

This booklet is the part of *The Athletes Wealth Playbook* written for you specifically — the active mid-career pro deciding what to do with the money the next 3 to 6 years are about to produce. Not the entry-level material. The decisions that compound.

TRUTH-TELLER

The decisions you make between year 4 and year 10 will shape the next 50 years more than the decisions you made on day one. The day-one decisions were about catching up. The decisions now are about not blowing it.

Five decisions are on the table:

- The second contract — what to do **before** you sign
- Deferred compensation — the Bonilla / Ohtani / Shaq architectures
- Pension and post-career healthcare
- Real estate, brand business, and lifestyle in your 30s
- Family trust architecture — while you're still earning

DECISION ONE

The Second Contract

What to do before you sign — not after.

The day after the second contract is signed is the worst day to start tax planning. The week before is the best. You have leverage exactly twice in your career: when you sign your first professional deal, and when you sign your second. Everyone in the negotiation room is optimizing for what they get out of the transaction. Your CPA, your agent, your business manager — even the team's deferred-comp consultant — have agendas that aren't yours.

The architecture of the deal matters more than the headline number. A \$40M / 4-year deal front-loaded into a \$25M signing bonus, paid in a state with no income tax in the year of receipt, with a \$5M deferred component vesting at age 45, is not the same instrument as a \$40M / 4-year deal paid evenly with no deferral. The second instrument loses 5 to 8 percentage points of effective rate and gives up the present-value optionality on the deferred piece.

BEFORE YOU SIGN

Three things have to be in place before you initial the term sheet: (1) a signed CPA engagement with someone who specializes in athletes, not just high-net-worth individuals; (2) a domicile decision — resident-of-which-state — that's already operational, not aspirational; and (3) a deferred-comp election that has been modeled against three plausible career-length scenarios. If any of the three is missing, push the signing date.

DECISION TWO

The Bonilla Architecture

Why every veteran should know how Bobby Bonilla still gets paid.

Every July 1st, the New York Mets send Bobby Bonilla a check for \$1,193,248.20. They've been doing it since 2011. They will keep doing it until 2035. Bonilla last played for the Mets in 1999.

The deal: at the end of the 1999 season, the Mets owed Bonilla \$5.9M for the final year of his contract. Rather than pay it, they negotiated a deferral — nothing for 11 years, then 25 annual payments of \$1.19M starting in 2011, totalling \$29.8M. That's a guaranteed 8% rate of return on the deferred amount, paid by an MLB franchise.

From the Mets' perspective at the time: they thought their Bernie Madoff investments would earn 12 to 15%. From Bonilla's perspective with hindsight: it's the safest paycheck in professional sports. He still gets a million-dollar check at age 62, and at 70, and at 72.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

If you have any contractual money the team would prefer to defer — and they almost always would — you have leverage to demand a guaranteed-rate structure. The team gets cash flow relief. You get a guaranteed annuity from a franchise that isn't going anywhere. Bonilla's deal looked like generosity in 2000. It looks like financial planning genius in 2026.

DECISION TWO (CONT.)

The Ohtani Variation

\$700M signed. \$20M / year cash. \$680M deferred to 2034-2043.

In December 2023, Shohei Ohtani signed the largest contract in North American sports history with the Los Angeles Dodgers: \$700M over 10 years. The headline number captured every news cycle. The structure is what historians will study.

Ohtani takes \$20M per year in cash during the 10 playing years of the contract. The remaining \$680M is deferred and paid out at \$68M per year from 2034 through 2043, the decade after his playing days end. This is the Bonilla architecture multiplied by 23.

Element	Bonilla (1999)	Ohtani (2023)
Deferred amount	\$5.9M	\$680M
Years to first payment	11	11
Total payout	\$29.8M over 25 yrs	\$680M over 10 yrs
Effective rate	~8%	Modeled at 8-10%
State residency at payout	Florida	Likely CA; advisable to revisit
Tax planning window	Closed in 2000	Open until 2034

WHAT BOTH STRUCTURES TEACH

The team is happy to defer if you ask. The athlete who refuses deferral — or who accepts it without negotiating the rate — leaves real money on the table. The mid-career window is exactly when you have the leverage to negotiate this. Don't wait for retirement to discover you wish you'd asked.

DECISION TWO (CONT.)

The Shaq SPIA Discipline

How a Hall of Famer forced his playing-career self to fund his post-career self.

In a 2019 podcast interview, Shaquille O'Neal described the financial discipline he imposed on himself during his playing days: he set aside a portion of every paycheck to purchase single-premium immediate annuities (SPIAs). The idea was simple. He didn't trust 22-year-old Shaq, or 28-year-old Shaq, with all the money. So he locked some of it away in instruments that paid him guaranteed monthly income for life, starting at retirement.

A SPIA is the simplest annuity instrument. You hand a life insurance company a lump sum. They guarantee you a fixed monthly payment for life (or for life plus a guaranteed period). The trade-off: the principal is gone. You can't get it back. In exchange, you get an income you cannot outlive.

For most working professionals, SPIAs are a partial-retirement-funding tool. For an athlete with a five-year earning window and forty-five years to live, they're an architectural discipline: a mechanism that prevents future-you from spending what current-you set aside.

THE SHAQ MODEL IN ONE SENTENCE

Take 5 to 10% of every check during your playing years and convert it to instruments your future self literally cannot touch — SPIAs, irrevocable trusts with locked distributions, or qualified retirement plans with fixed payout schedules. The math of an athlete's career makes this not paranoid but rational.

POLICY CALLOUT

If Every League Required It

A thought experiment from the practitioner desk.

There is a bankruptcy statistic that has been repeated for two decades: roughly 60% of NBA players go bankrupt within 5 years of retirement, and 78% of NFL players are in financial distress within two years of leaving the league. The figures are debated — the academic literature is messier than the soundbite — but the directional truth is unambiguous: professional athletes lose money at a rate that no other high-earning population approaches.

THE THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

If every league required a Bonilla-style structure on every contract above some threshold — say, 30% of guaranteed money paid out over 25 years post-retirement at a guaranteed 6% rate — the bankruptcy statistic would functionally disappear. The math is mechanical: if you cannot spend the money in year one because it doesn't arrive until year twenty, you cannot blow it in year one. The leagues don't require it because they don't have to. The athletes don't demand it because the agents don't push for it. The agents don't push for it because the deferred component reduces the headline number on which their commission is calculated. The system works exactly as it's designed to. Just not for the player.

You don't have to wait for the league to mandate this. You can demand a deferred component in your own next contract. Bonilla did. Ohtani did. The Shaq SPIA discipline accomplished the same thing through a different instrument.

WHY THE BONILLA DEAL IS MLB-ONLY

The CBA Constraint

What your league actually allows - and what it doesn't.

The Bonilla, Ohtani, and Shaq architectures on the previous pages are not equally available in every league. They work in baseball because Article XVI of the MLB CBA permits unlimited deferral and the Competitive Balance Tax (CBT) calculates a contract's Average Annual Value at the present value of the deferred amount, not the nominal amount. The MLB team gets real CBT relief from offering deferral, which is what creates the negotiating space for player-favorable terms like Bonilla's 8% guaranteed rate.

The other three major leagues each block the Bonilla structure for different reasons:

League	What blocks Bonilla?	Closest available analog
NFL	2020 CBA: deferred salary counts against the cap when EARNED, not when paid. The team gets no cap relief from offering deferral. Signing-bonus proration capped at 5 years.	Contract restructure (cap relief for the team, but no payment delay for the player)
NBA	2023 CBA Article 25: hard 25% ceiling on per-season deferral. Bonilla deferred 100% - would violate the ceiling. Cap also counts when earned, not when paid.	Up to 25% deferral is permitted but rarely offered (no cap incentive for team)
NHL	Anti-front-loading rules + cap-counts-when-earned. Salary range within a contract limited to 35% of the high year - designed to prevent Kovalchuk-style deals.	League pension + healthcare benefits at 160-game vesting cliff

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU AS A NON-MLB VETERAN

If you play in the NFL, NBA, or NHL, the team cannot offer you a Bonilla-style deal even if you ask for one. The CBA does not permit it. Your individual remedy is the Shaq SPIA discipline (single-premium immediate annuities purchased from playing-career income) plus irrevocable trust structures with locked distributions. The discipline is the same; you build it yourself rather than negotiating it into your contract.

THE COLLECTIVE REMEDY - BRING IT TO YOUR UNION REP

The CBA constraint is not a law of physics. It is a negotiated outcome that could be rewritten at the next CBA cycle. **If your league's CBA were rewritten to permit MLB-style unlimited deferral with parallel cap-relief mechanism and a funded-reserve requirement, the bankruptcy statistic in your league would drop drastically.** Bring this conversation to your player representative now, not at the eleventh hour of the next CBA negotiation. Most player reps have never been asked. Be the player who asks.

POST-CAREER FINANCIAL OUTCOMES

The League-by-League Comparison

What the published data shows about post-career financial distress and bankruptcy.

The post-career financial-distress and bankruptcy data, league by league, shows a consistent pattern. Major League Baseball players experience materially lower rates of post-career bankruptcy than NFL or NBA players. The same data set also shows that MLB is the only league whose Collective Bargaining Agreement permits Bonilla-style deferred compensation. Whether the two facts are related is an editorial question - this page presents the published data and identifies the potential CBA-level intervention without drawing the causal arrow further than the data supports.

League	Post-career financial distress	Bankruptcy rate	CBA permits Bonilla?
NFL	Approximately 78% face serious financial hardships after retirement (industry estimate; methodology debated)	Approximately 15.7% file bankruptcy within 12 years of retirement (Carrington-Holzman, NBER 2015)	No - cap-counts-when-earned
NBA	Approximately 60% face serious financial hardships after retirement (industry estimate)	Higher than MLB; methodology and timing varies across studies	No - 25% per-season ceiling on deferral
MLB	Materially lower rates reported; longer average career adds protection	Approximately 5-6% file bankruptcy within 12 years of retirement	Yes - Article XVI; unlimited deferral with funded reserve
NHL	Limited published data	Limited published data	No - anti-front-loading rules

WHAT THE DATA POINTS TO

The MLB bankruptcy rate is approximately one-third of the NFL bankruptcy rate. Multiple factors contribute: longer average career, deferred-comp structures that delay payment and impose discipline, and other features of MLB compensation. The Bonilla architecture is one identifiable structural difference between the leagues. The cross-CBA section of this guide describes what a parallel provision in the NFL, NBA, or NHL would need to address. Whether to pursue that revision is a CBA-negotiation question for the parties at the table; this guide's role is to surface the data and the structural option, not to argue for any particular outcome.

FOR ACTIVE PLAYERS - TWO PARALLEL TRACKS

Until and unless the CBA changes, build the post-career income discipline yourself - single-premium immediate annuities (the Shaq model), irrevocable trusts with locked distributions, or other instruments that delay access to a portion of playing-career income. If you are involved in an upcoming CBA negotiation - whether as a player representative, agent, club executive, or league official - the cross-CBA section identifies the three structural drafting issues that any deferred-comp provision would need to address. The conversation belongs to the parties at the table.

WHY THIS HASN'T HAPPENED YET

The Historical and Political Reasons

Three pieces of league history and four overlapping political dynamics explain why the NFL, NBA, and NHL CBAs block what MLB allows.

THE HISTORY - WHAT EACH LEAGUE WAS REACTING TO

Each non-MLB CBA's restriction on deferred compensation was written in response to a specific historical concern. None of those concerns were unreasonable at the time. All of them produced rules that are now in tension with the player-welfare argument the bankruptcy data demands.

NBA - the Magic Johnson era and the early-1990s deferred-comp concerns. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, several NBA contracts (most prominently Magic Johnson's 1981 25-year deal with the Lakers, and a wave of similar back-loaded structures around the league) created multi-decade post-career payment obligations. Several franchises - notably the Lakers, the Pistons, the Trail Blazers - found themselves with cumulative deferred liabilities that complicated subsequent ownership transitions and became a salary-cap-circumvention risk. The 25% ceiling, codified in subsequent CBAs and reaffirmed in the 2023 agreement, was a corrective response. The intent was franchise stability and cap transparency. The unintended consequence was elimination of the player-welfare benefit.

NFL - the cap-circumvention history. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, NFL teams used various deferral and conversion techniques to manufacture artificially low current-year cap hits while committing real cash to players in future years. The cap-counts-when-earned rule was written specifically to close that loophole. It treats deferred salary as a current-year cap event regardless of when the player actually receives the money. The rule succeeded at preventing cap circumvention. It also eliminated any team incentive to offer deferred structure to players, because the team gets no cap relief from doing so.

NHL - the Kovalchuk and Luongo deals of the early 2010s. In 2010, the New Jersey Devils signed Ilya Kovalchuk to a 17-year, \$102M contract that was front-loaded with declining salary years - including several at the league minimum near the end - designed to lower the cap hit on the AAV calculation. The NHL initially rejected the deal as circumventing the cap. A revised 15-year deal was approved. Roberto Luongo's 12-year, \$64M Vancouver deal raised similar concerns. The 2012-13 CBA wrote the anti-front-loading rules - salary range capped at 35% of high year, lowest year at least 50% of highest - specifically to prevent that structure. Same intent as the NFL rule, same unintended consequence.

WHY THE BONILLA APPROACH IS UNIQUE TO MLB

The CBA Drafting History

Each league's CBA emerged from a specific historical context.

The Bonilla, Ohtani, and Shaq architectures shown earlier work in baseball because Article XVI of the MLB CBA permits unlimited deferral with funded-reserve protection. The other three major leagues each took a different drafting path:

League	What blocks Bonilla?	Closest available analog
NFL	2020 CBA: deferred salary counts against the cap when EARNED, not when paid. Signing-bonus proration capped at 5 years.	Contract restructure (cap relief for the team, no payment delay for the player)
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WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU AS A NON-MLB VETERAN

If you play in the NFL, NBA, or NHL, the team cannot offer you a Bonilla-style deal under the current CBA. Your individual remedy is the Shaq SPIA discipline - single-premium immediate annuities purchased from playing-career income - plus irrevocable trust structures with locked distributions. You build the discipline yourself rather than negotiating it into your contract.

FOR THOSE INVOLVED IN UPCOMING CBA NEGOTIATIONS

If you are part of an upcoming CBA negotiation - in any role - the cross-CBA section of the full *Athletes Wealth Playbook* identifies three structural drafting issues that any future deferred-comp provision would need to address (cap-circumvention accounting, long-tail franchise liability funding, and contract-comparability disclosure). These are the same issues the original CBAs were written to address. MLB has an operational precedent for each. Whether to pursue revision is a question for the parties; this guide supplies the structural framing.

DECISION THREE

Pension and Post-Career Healthcare

Vesting math + the CTE-aware insurance question.

Each major league has its own pension and post-career health plan, and each has its own vesting cliff. You cannot afford to assume your benefits coordinator at the team has explained this correctly — they often haven't, because the people who handle this for the team rotate frequently and the rules change.

League	Pension vesting	Post-career healthcare
NFL	3 credited seasons partial; 4+ full	5-year coverage post-career; bridge to Medicare
NBA	3 years vesting; full benefit at 10+ years	Health & welfare plan; 5+ yrs for full eligibility
MLB	43 days active for healthcare; 1 day for pension	Continued coverage tied to service time
NHL	160 NHL games for full pension eligibility	Reimbursement-based plan tied to service
WNBA	Plan exists but materially smaller; 401(k)-style component	Limited; requires private supplementation

THE CTE QUESTION

If you played in the NFL, NHL, or any contact sport at the professional level, your long-term-care and disability picture is materially different from the general population. Long-term-care insurance underwriting can be hostile to former contact-sport athletes. Lock in coverage *before* any cognitive symptoms appear and before you enter your 40s — underwriting changes dramatically after that point.

DECISION FOUR

Real Estate, Brand Business, Lifestyle

What to buy, what to start, what to avoid in your peak earning decade.

The pattern is consistent across leagues and decades: athletes lose more money on residential real estate and friends-and-family business ventures than on any other category combined. Not on the headline-grabbing things — not on bad agents, not on Ponzi schemes, not on exotic cars. On houses they don't live in, restaurants they don't run, and businesses owned by people they trust.

THE RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE TRAP

Three houses is the median number of properties owned by an active veteran pro. Two of them are not generating positive cash flow. One is held in your name personally, exposing you to liability that an LLC or trust would have shielded. The fix is mechanical: review the title structure on every property, move investment property out of personal name, and audit occupancy + cash flow at least annually.

THE BRAND-BUSINESS REALITY

Restaurants, gyms, NIL collectives, sneaker collaborations, and apparel lines have a five-year survival rate below 30%. Not because the businesses are bad, but because the athlete is rarely the right operator and rarely the right CEO. The successful athlete businesses share a common pattern: **experienced operator runs the company; athlete contributes capital, brand, and a defined non-operational role.** Reverse the pattern at your own peril.

DECISION FIVE

Family Trust Architecture

Set this up while you're still earning — not after.

Estate planning vehicles work better when funded with assets that have not yet appreciated. An NIL deal worth \$50K today and possibly \$5M in three years should be inside a GRAT, IDGT, or dynasty trust *now* — not after the appreciation. The difference for an athlete entering peak earnings is measured in seven to eight figures over a generation.

Vehicle	When it earns its keep	Window for veteran pro
GRAT	Asset expected to appreciate; locks in low gift-tax basis	Year 4-7, before peak earnings
IDGT	Income asset; income tax paid by grantor reduces estate	Anytime; useful with deferred-comp
Dynasty Trust	Multi-gen wealth transfer; GST exemption planning	Once net worth > \$13.6M (2026 cliff)
SLAT	Married athletes; uses one spouse's exemption	Anytime; careful drafting required
ILIT	Life insurance proceeds outside the estate	Term policies; valuable for contact-sport athletes

THE PRACTITIONER REALITY

Most athletes get to estate planning in their late 30s or post-career, when assets have appreciated and the planning window has closed. The veteran pro has a 5- to 8-year window where the estate planning math is asymmetrically favorable. Use it. The cost of standing up the structure (~\$25K to \$80K in legal fees) is a rounding error against what it preserves.

COMPLIANCE

What Bites Veterans Specifically

The audit risks that grow as you accumulate.

Five compliance issues that under-50-game rookies don't worry about — but you should:

- **Domicile audits.** States with income tax (NY, CA, MN, NJ) audit former and current residents aggressively when they suspect a domicile change wasn't real. The documentation burden is on you, not them.
- **Endorsement income reporting.** 1099 income from social, brand deals, and appearances often arrives late or not at all. The IRS still expects it on time. A standing process for tracking endorsement deliverables and payments is non-optional.
- **Foreign tax credit complexity.** If you've played overseas (CHN, EUR, AUS leagues, exhibition tours), foreign tax paid is generally creditable but requires substantiation. Missing the credit is leaving 20-40% of that income on the table.
- **FBAR + Form 8938.** Foreign bank accounts above \$10K aggregate require FBAR filing. Brokerage account in a Swiss bank, signing bonus held in a Cayman account, endorsement payments routed through a non-US entity — all reportable.
- **Constructive receipt on deferred comp.** The structure of your deferred-comp election controls whether you owe tax now or later. A poorly drafted election can accelerate the entire deferred amount into the current year. Have a tax attorney review every deferred-comp election before signing.

ANNUAL COMPLIANCE RHYTHM

January: confirm domicile status with your CPA. April: file federal + multi-state returns (jock tax). June: mid-year tax projection + Q2 estimated. October: Q3 estimated + planning for any year-end deferral elections. December: harvest losses, prepay state where allowed, confirm trust funding deadlines.

DECISION SIX

The Partner Conversation

The financial conversation almost no athlete couple has the right way.

Most veteran pros are married, partnered, or about to be. The financial conversation that matters most is rarely the one most couples have. The wrong conversation is about the headline number and the lifestyle. The right conversation is about who controls what, what happens if the career ends in three years instead of eight, and what the family balance sheet actually looks like — not the social-media version of it.

THE THREE-CONVERSATION FRAMEWORK

Conversation 1 (operational): Who has access to which accounts? Who signs what? Who can wire money? **Conversation 2 (architectural):** If the career ends abruptly, what's our 12-month plan? Where does income come from? **Conversation 3 (legacy):** What happens to the kids' money, the trusts, the business interests if one of us dies or we separate? All three conversations need to happen — separately, with documented outcomes, before the second contract closes.

Specific items to confirm in writing: joint vs. separate accounts and which goes where; spousal access to retirement accounts, deferred-comp, and the trust corpus; designated beneficiaries on every account (often outdated post-marriage); pre- or post-nuptial agreement reviewed against current state law; named guardians for minor children with trust-funded support already in place.

TRUTH-TELLER

The athletes who lose the most money in divorce are not the ones with the worst lawyers. They are the ones who never set up the architecture in the first place. Architecture is not romance-killing — it's the most adult thing you can do for the family.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Deferred-Comp Election Math

A side-by-side on a \$30M / 4-year deal at age 28.

The framework above is abstract. The math below is not. Assume a four-year deal, \$30M total guaranteed, age 28 at signing, current state of residence is California (13.3% top marginal). Three plausible election structures:

Structure	Year 1-4 cash	Deferred	PV at age 50	Effective rate
A. Take it all now (no deferral)	\$30.0M (\$7.5M / yr)	\$0	Depends on investment returns	~50.7% combined federal + CA
B. 70 / 30 split, deferred 10 yrs at 6%	\$21.0M (\$5.25M / yr)	\$9.0M → \$16.1M at age 38	\$16.1M nominal / ~\$11M PV	~46.3% blended (CA at receipt)
C. 50 / 50 split, deferred 15 yrs at 7%, FL residency at receipt	\$15.0M (\$3.75M / yr)	\$15.0M → \$41.4M at age 43	\$41.4M nominal / ~\$20M PV	~32.8% blended (FL state-free)

THE DECISION TREE

Election A wins only if you have a verifiable use for the cash now (debt payoff, business investment, family obligation) AND high confidence in your own investment discipline. Election B is the middle ground — 30% deferred is enough to materially shift the post-career picture without starving current cash flow. Election C is the Bonilla / Ohtani play, and requires actually moving residency before the deferred amount lands. The 17.9-percentage-point rate difference between A and C is roughly \$5.4M on this deal. Make the election with eyes open.

INSURANCE

What Coverage Actually Belongs in Your Stack

The five policies every veteran pro should have priced and decided by year 6.

Coverage	Why it matters for vets	Typical annual premium
Disability income (own-occupation)	Career-ending injury before vesting wipes out future earnings; own-occ definition is critical	\$8K - \$25K for \$20K/mo benefit
Term life insurance	20- or 30-year term covering peak-earnings income replacement; premium-locked at current health	\$3K - \$12K for \$5M coverage
Long-term care (LTC)	Underwriting hardens dramatically after age 40 and after any cognitive symptoms; lock in early	\$4K - \$9K at age 35
Personal liability umbrella	\$5M - \$20M coverage layered above auto + home; cheap protection against high-net-worth lawsuit exposure	\$1K - \$3K for \$5M
Captive insurance (advanced)	For athletes with brand-business income; can shift income, deduct premiums, build asset-protected reserves	\$50K minimum entry

THE OWN-OCC DEFINITION

When buying disability insurance, the most important word in the contract is 'own-occupation.' True own-occ pays the benefit if you can no longer perform your specific job (professional athlete) even if you can do other work. 'Any-occupation' policies pay only if you cannot do any job — a near-impossible standard for an able-bodied person. The premium difference is real; the protection difference is enormous. Insist on own-occ specifically defined for your sport.

PLAYBOOK

The Domicile Change

How to actually move from a high-tax state to FL / TX / NV — and survive the audit.

California, New York, New Jersey, and Minnesota audit former residents aggressively. The burden of proof is on you to show you actually changed domicile. The defining principle: domicile is where your *life* is, not where your mailing address is. The court will look at the totality of facts — and the inventory below is what they look at.

Documentation point	What it means	Evidence to keep
Days physically present	Out of high-tax state >183 days/yr	Calendar with travel logs, flight receipts, hotel records
Driver's license + voter registration	Both updated to new state within 60 days of move	DMV receipt, voter card with date
Primary home	Owned or leased in new state; sized for actual living	Lease/deed, utility bills (continuous), homestead exemption claimed
Banking and brokerage	Primary accounts moved; statements addressed to new state	12+ months of statements addressed to new domicile
Doctors, dentists, vets	Routine providers in new state	Records of new-state visits within 90 days
Vehicles, family, pets	Spouse + dependents + animals at new domicile	Family-member documentation; pet registrations
Religious / community	Place of worship, gym, club memberships in new state	Membership records, attendance
Will and estate documents	Updated to reflect new state law	Re-executed will referencing new state of domicile

THE MISTAKE THAT BREAKS DOMICILE CASES

Keeping a primary residence in the old state — especially one the family uses regularly — while claiming domicile in the new state. Auditors treat this as conclusive evidence the move wasn't real. If you're not going to sell or convert the old house to verifiable rental, your domicile-change defense is weak. Plan accordingly before you sign next contract.

CHARITABLE

DAFs, CRTs, and Foundation Architecture

The peak-earnings window is when charitable structures earn their keep.

Athletes who plan to give significantly across their lifetimes — and most veteran pros eventually do — leave money on the table by writing checks instead of using structured vehicles. The two structures every veteran pro should have priced and decided on:

Vehicle	How it works	When it earns its keep
Donor-Advised Fund (DAF)	Contribute appreciated stock or cash; take the deduction now; recommend grants to charities later, on your timeline	Anytime; especially valuable for bunching deductions in high-income years and donating appreciated NIL or endorsement-equity stock
Charitable Remainder Trust (CRT)	Transfer appreciated asset; take partial deduction; receive income for life or term of years; remainder goes to charity	Concentrated highly-appreciated position (single endorsement equity, real estate); want lifetime income stream + charitable goal
Private foundation	Family-controlled grant-making entity; subject to 5% annual distribution requirement and 1.39% excise tax on net investment income	Net worth >\$25M; family name and legacy goals; willingness to administer (or pay administrator)
Charitable Lead Trust (CLT)	Charity receives income for term of years; remainder reverts to family at reduced gift-tax cost	Wealth-transfer goal with charitable component; works well in low-interest-rate environments

THE BUNCHING STRATEGY

Standard deduction in 2026 is approximately \$30,000 for a married couple. If you give \$25,000 per year to charity, you get no deduction benefit because you'd take the standard anyway. Instead, contribute three years of giving (\$75,000) into a DAF in one year, take the itemized deduction that year (\$75,000 above standard), then take the standard deduction the next two years while still recommending grants from the DAF on schedule. Net: same charitable impact, materially better tax outcome.

ACTION CALENDAR

The Veteran Pro's 12-Month Operating Rhythm

What to do, by month, every year of your veteran career.

Month	Action item	Why now
January	Confirm domicile status + tax-residency strategy with CPA; lock in any change before season	Calendar year reset; start the day-counting clock
February	Review insurance stack: DI, life, LTC, umbrella; reprice if you turned 30 or 35 in prior year	Premiums escalate at age cliffs
March	Q1 estimated tax + IRA / Roth contribution decision	April 15 federal deadline + IRA contribution window
April	File federal + multi-state returns; review jock-tax allocation	Filing season; many states owe you refunds you might miss
May	Estate plan annual review with attorney; trust funding check	Often skipped; corrosive over time
June	Mid-year tax projection; Q2 estimated; investment-policy compliance check vs. IPS	Drift from IPS visible by midyear; correct now
July	Brand / business income review; entity-structure check; agent fee audit	Half-year endorsement deliverables visible
August	Pre-season deferred-comp planning if a contract negotiation is upcoming	Election windows often close before season starts
September	Q3 estimated; charitable giving plan for year (DAF contribution timing)	DAF contributions need processing time before year-end
October	Year-end tax projection; harvest losses; consider Roth conversions if income year is low	Last clean window before year-end transactions
November	Trust funding deadline; confirm any annual exclusion gifts to family complete	Annual exclusion (\$18K / 2026) is use-it-or-lose-it
December	Final year-end review; confirm prepaid state tax (where allowed); document domicile-establishing facts for the year	End of tax year; documentation for audit defense

PRE-RETIREMENT

The Six-Month Wind-Down

When the career-ending decision is in sight — what to do in the final 180 days.

Most athletes know roughly six months in advance that their playing career is ending — through injury status, contract decisions, performance trajectory, or personal choice. The six months before the last paycheck are not the time to start planning. They're the time to execute a plan that should have been built years earlier. If the plan exists, here's the execution sequence:

- **Month 6 out:** Confirm pension vesting status, healthcare bridge options, and COBRA window with the league benefits coordinator. Get it in writing.
- **Month 5 out:** Insurance review — DI policy continuation, life insurance still in force, LTC coverage portable. Lock anything that requires playing-status to qualify.
- **Month 4 out:** Endorsement contract review — which deals continue post-playing, which terminate, and what notice is required.
- **Month 3 out:** Domicile decision finalized; if moving, the move is operationally underway (lease/purchase, utilities, DMV).
- **Month 2 out:** Investment policy statement updated to reflect post-career income and time horizon; deferred-comp election decisions confirmed.
- **Month 1 out:** Final review with full team — CPA, attorney, RIA, agent, business manager. Document the plan and the open questions.
- **Month 0 (last paycheck):** The first month of post-career operating; not the start of planning. The plan should already be running.

THE IDENTITY CONVERSATION

The financial side of retirement is solvable with discipline and a competent team. The identity side — who you are when 'professional athlete' is no longer the answer to 'what do you do?' — is the harder transition. The athletes who navigate it best start the identity conversation while they're still playing, often with a sports psychologist or executive coach. The financial plan and the identity plan need to mature together, not sequentially.

READING PATH

Where to start in the full Playbook

If this booklet earned 30 minutes, the full book earns six hours.

The Athletes Wealth Playbook is 256 pages organized into five parts. As a veteran pro, you don't need Part I (rookie economics) or Part II (NIL). Skip to where the depth matters for you:

Read first	Why it matters now	Pages
Ch 10 Reading Your Pro Contract	The structural elements you didn't focus on in your first deal	see TOC
Ch 11 Signing Bonus Tax Planning	Bonus + state residency + deferral architecture	see TOC
Ch 12 Endorsement and Off-Field Income	1099 management + entity structure for brand income	see TOC
Ch 13 Retirement and Pension Mechanics	Vesting cliffs by league + bridge to Medicare	see TOC
Ch 14 Post-Career Healthcare and CTE	LTCi underwriting + cognitive insurance discipline	see TOC
Ch 15 Investment Policy for Athletes	IPS construction, advisor selection, conflict of interest	see TOC
Ch 18 Family Trust Structures	GRAT, IDGT, dynasty, SLAT, ILIT decision tree	see TOC
Field Cases Appendix	Bonilla / Ohtani / Shaq / Title IX in greater depth	see TOC

CLOSING

Five years from now

Five years from today, one of two things will be true. Either you'll be looking back at the veteran years as the period when you set up the architecture that lets you and your family live well for the next forty — or you'll be the one explaining to a younger teammate why he should not make the decisions you made.

The mid-career window is short. The compounding effect of a Bonilla-style structure, a SPIA discipline, a properly funded GRAT, or a domicile decision made before the second contract is real and measurable. The cost of getting this wrong is also real and measurable.

TRUTH-TELLER

37 years of operating practice suggests one consistent thing: the athletes who get the next five years right are not the ones who maximize their headline number. They're the ones who structure their headline number into instruments that protect future-them from current-them.

Get the full *Athletes Wealth Playbook* at baratelliinstitute.com. Share this veteran edition with any teammate, former teammate, or peer who's heading into a second contract.

Built to direct your professional engagement, not replace it. Not legal, tax, or financial advice for any specific person or institution.