

# DEAL DIARY: BRONCOS, WALTON ENLIST VETERAN ADVISORY ROSTER

*Hogan Lovells, Proskauer Rose and Covington work the legal side of the deal for the NFL franchise while Allen & Co. handles the financial advisory work.*

BY MICHAEL BROWN

Hogan Lovells is advising on its second large sports deal with the sale of the National Football League's Denver Broncos to a group led by former Walmart Inc. (WMT) chairman Rob Walton, son of the company's founder, while Proskauer Rose LLP and Covington & Burling LLP have taken familiar posts on other sides of the deal.

A Hogan Lovells team led by partners Matt Eisler and Russell Hedman, both based in Denver, is advising Walton as well as other buyers in his group, on the Tuesday, June 7, deal that clocks in at a reported \$4.65 billion. The price tag reportedly would make the deal the largest ever for a sports franchise.

Other members of the acquiring group include Walton's daughter, Carrie Walton Penner, and her husband, Greg Penner, as well as JPMorgan Chase & Co. (JPM) director and Starbucks Corp. (SBUX) chairman Melody Hobson.

Eisler also helped Mikhail Prokhorov exit his stake in the National Basketball Association's Brooklyn Nets in 2019 to Joe Tsai, executive vice chairman and co-founder of Chinese e-commerce company Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. (BABA). Hogan's Richard Climan, meanwhile, led a team advising the company in its \$16 billion acquisition of Flipkart Pvt. Ltd.

A Proskauer Rose team of Joseph M. Leccese, Jason Krochak and Jon Oram is advising the Denver Broncos on the sale, which reportedly may close in 60 to 90 days



owners. The firm and Leccese, head of its sports practice, are frequent flyers to professional sports advisory work. Proskauer advised Jerry Richardson and other ownership members in the 2018 sale of the NFL's Carolina Panthers to David Tepper, the founder and president of global hedge fund Appaloosa Management LP.

Proskauer is regular counsel to the NFL and other sports leagues, having advised on the \$1.2 billion sale of Major League Baseball's Miami Marlins in October 2017 on their sale to a Derek Jeter-led group and with the NFL's Buffalo Bills on their sale for \$1.4 billion in 2014 to the Pegula family, which also owns the Buffalo Sabres National Hockey League franchise. The firm has advised the Panthers since 2010 and advised the

# Proskauer's Proven Pros

The firm, which has connections to the NBA's late former commissioner David Stern, has enjoyed continued success on record-setting sports franchise deals.

Team - League (Party advised)	Valuation	Year
<b>Denver Broncos Football Club - NFL (Seller)</b>	<b>\$4.65 billion</b>	2022
<b>Women's National Basketball Association (League)</b>	<b>\$1 billion</b>	2022
<b>Carolina Panthers - NFL (Seller)</b>	<b>\$2.2 billion</b>	2018
<b>Miami Marlins - MLB (Seller)</b>	<b>\$1.2 billion</b>	2017
<b>Houston Rockets - NBA (League)</b>	<b>\$2.2 billion</b>	2017
<b>Ultimate Fighting Championship (Buyer)</b>	<b>\$4 billion</b>	2016
<b>Los Angeles Clippers - NBA (League)</b>	<b>\$2 billion</b>	2014
<b>Buffalo Bills - NFL (Seller)</b>	<b>\$1.4 billion</b>	2014
<b>Cleveland Browns - NFL (Buyer)</b>	<b>\$1 billion</b>	2012

team in connection with renovations to Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, N.C., among other matters.

Proskauer, too, advised the NBA on the \$2.2 billion sale of the Houston Rockets in 2017 and the \$2 billion sale of the Los Angeles Clippers in 2014 and MLB on the \$2 billion sale of the Los Angeles Dodgers in 2012.

Meanwhile, the NFL looked to a Covington & Burling LLP team led by Peter Zern for counsel. Zern previously represented Steve Ballmer in connection with acquisition of the Clippers and represented Christopher Cohan in connection with the sale of the NBA's Golden State Warriors to Peter Guber and Joe Lacob for a then-record \$450 million in 2010. Zern also has worked with the NFL

on various league and team financings. The NFL's general counsel, Jeffrey Pash, is a former Covington partner.

Steve Greenberg of Allen & Co. LLC was hired in January to shop the team along with Proskauer. Allen & Co., among other sports work, also marketed the Nets and NBA's Milwaukee Bucks; MLB's New York Mets, San Diego Padres and Houston Astros; a stake in the NBA's San Antonio Spurs; and a majority stake in Yankees Entertainment & Sports Network LLC.

The Denver Broncos are owned by the Pat Bowlen Trust, controlled by members of late owner Pat Bowlen's family. Bowlen, who purchased the team in 1984 for \$70 million, died in June 2019.