

President of Ripken's commercial arm is leaving

Rainess to pursue dream of establishing own firm

By JON MORGAN
SUN STAFF

★ The agent who assembled Cal Ripken's vast commercial empire over the past decade is leaving that job to establish his own firm to negotiate player contracts.

As president of The Tufton Group, Ripken's commercial arm, Ira S. Rainess pioneered "milestone marketing." He took advantage of Ripken's many career achievements with merchandise sales and licensing deals.

Other athletes have followed the model to great profit.

But Rainess said he has always wanted to spend more time representing athletes in their contract talks, and that will be the focus of Rainess Player Management when it goes into business Jan. 1.

It's a lucrative but crowded business. Rainess, working in cooperation with Ripken's agent, Ron Shapiro, hopes to establish a niche representing baseball players, starting with young draftees.

"This has always been my goal," Rainess said.

His client list now includes Michael Floyd, a Mount St. Joseph High pitcher who was signed by the Philadelphia Phillies' organization for a record \$4.2 million bonus.

The firm will be based in Baltimore with an office in North Palm Beach, Fla.

Ripken, in a written statement, said, "While Ira will be missed at Tufton, I am thrilled to see him pursue his dream."

Rainess, 34, holds degrees from the University of Baltimore law school and University of Maryland business school. He joined Tufton in 1993 and became its president in 1995.