

# Sports & Entertainment

Polsinelli's Sports & Entertainment group represents professional and amateur sports teams, conferences and leagues, corporate sponsors and brands, media companies, and marketing, advertising and talent agencies. Recognizing the overlap between the sports and entertainment industries, we have assembled a national team of attorneys with the necessary experience to advise clients on all types of business transactions, real estate development and financing, and litigation matters.

## Sports Industry

While some firms may concentrate on a particular service or sector within the sports industry, Polsinelli's national sports practice covers both professional and collegiate sports and draws from multidisciplinary areas, including:

- Media Rights, Naming Rights and other Commercial Transactions
- Private Equity, Mergers & Acquisitions and other Investments
- Antitrust, Commercial, Class Action and Multidistrict Litigation
- Corporate Governance
- Government and Internal Investigations
- Real Estate and Sports Facility Finance
- Government Incentives and Negotiations
- Licensing, Trademark, Copyright and other Intellectual Property-related Transactions
- Employee Benefits and Executive Compensation
- Public Policy
- College Athletic Conference Governance and Realignment

We serve a broad spectrum of clients across sports industry verticals including:

- Professional sports teams and leagues
- Collegiate and amateur conferences, athletic departments and associations
- Facilities operators, including stadiums, other sports-related facilities and their investment activities
- Private equity firms, strategic buyers and target companies across a range of industries, including professional sports, eSports, entertainment, retail, media and technology in the structuring and negotiations of mergers, acquisitions, dispositions, carve-outs and leveraged buyouts
- Public and private companies in connection with team and venue sponsorships, athletic event and venue partnerships, individual endorsement relationships (including NIL) and technology licensing
- Sports equipment manufacturers, retail brands, apparel companies, athletic event operators, sports television broadcast networks and sports technology entities
- Professional and amateur coaches, broadcasters, athletic administrators and sports executives
- NIL collectives

## Entertainment

Polsinelli's national entertainment practice draws from multidisciplinary areas, including:

- Media Rights and Commercial Transactions
- Private Equity, Mergers & Acquisitions and other Investments
- Real Estate and Facility Finance
- Government Incentives and Negotiations
- Commercial and Multidistrict Litigation
- Government and Internal Investigations
- Licensing, Trademark, Copyright and other Intellectual Property-related Transactions

We serve a broad spectrum of clients across the entertainment space including:

- Facilities operators, including arenas, concert theatres, museums and theme parks
- Private equity firms, strategic buyers and target companies
- Events agencies and promoters
- Corporate brands staging events or sourcing content
- Media companies, including film and podcast production companies
- Advertising, talent and marketing agencies

## Matters

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### Corporate and Transactional, Venture Capital and Private Equity

- Negotiated a joint venture and intellectual property licensing deal on behalf of a National Football League team for a hospitality group to operate a team-themed restaurant at the local airport.
- Advised a private equity client in connection with its \$4+ billion bid to purchase a mixed martial arts organization.
- Represented a strategic buyer regarding its multibillion bid to acquire a multimedia rights entity.
- Counseled a foreign investor with respect to its proposed acquisition of adventure race company.
- Formation (including operating, venue, media rights and sponsorship agreements) of four postseason Collegiate Football Bowl games and sale of three to a national media company.
- Represented an eSports team with respect to its partnership with and sale to a National Hockey League Team.
- Advised a National Football League team in connection with its first-of-its-kind sports betting relationship.
- Counseled owners of Major League Baseball, National Football League and National Basketball Association teams regarding the purchase and sale of franchise equity stakes.
- Led strategic representation of collegiate conferences in membership realignment and expansion developments (including negotiation and mediation of the transition of more than 20 universities' conference memberships) and development of defenses to respond to future realignment initiatives.
- Negotiation of venue, sponsorship, game and other agreements relating to championship sporting events.
- Advised a National Football League team with respect to COVID preparedness concerning personnel and fan attendance.
- Counseled a National Football League team in connection with its trademark licensing and joint partnership with an athlete and a leading consumer goods company.
- Represented an English Premier League team with respect to cutting-edge virtual reality licensing transaction.

## Real Estate

- Represented a National Football League team in crafting the strategy and passing authorizing legislation during a special session of the Kansas State Legislature for unprecedented state investment in new stadiums and practice facilities in Kansas.
- Assisted with the development of NASCAR's 80,000-seat Kansas International Speedway located in Kansas City, Kansas.
- Assisted with the financing and development of a 18,000-seat soccer and entertainment stadium and national level youth tournament athletic complex.
- Assisted a client in the \$300 million Tax Increment Financing and Transportation Development District financing for the development of the Power & Light District, revitalization of Bartle Hall and the development of the Sprint Center, now the T-Mobile Center, in downtown Kansas City, Missouri.
- Assisted with the development of a 100,000-square-foot training center for the U.S. National Men's, Women's and Youth Soccer teams. The project included approximately eight competition sized soccer fields, indoor and outdoor training facilities, coaching and referee conference facilities and related amenities.
- Served as development and finance counsel in the construction financing for a 11,500-capacity, \$117-million stadium which will be the first stadium purpose-built for a women's professional team.
- Represented a National Football League team in connection with its lease and occupancy of the football stadium and county sports complex.
- Assisting a client with the planning and zoning process, and the approval of more than \$130 million of economic development incentives, in connection with their proposed redevelopment of a former water park into a first class sporting and entertainment destination.
- Represented the City of St. Louis in the Ballpark Village Missouri Downtown Economic Stimulus financing project. The development includes 100,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, a St. Louis Cardinals Hall of Fame and Museum, as well as public event space.
- Assisted with the acquisition and redevelopment of a golf course located on over 170 acres in Missouri. Representation included land use approvals and public incentives.
- Represented a client in obtaining approval of STAR Bond and Community Improvement District financing to help fund a mixed-use project that features the nation's first "franchise" location of the American Museum of Natural History.

## Complex Litigation and Dispute Resolution

- Managed the strategic litigation of significant class action matters, including antitrust litigation over CFA and NCAA rules, the *NCAA v Board of Regents*, Law, O'Bannon, Marshall, Arrington, Alston, Jenkins and the "Same Sport/Same School" Concussion litigation.
- Successfully represented a sports media rights holder as lead counsel in a six-day arbitration against a broadcaster regarding a contract dispute.
- Successfully defended a collegiate conference in a class action brought by former-student athletes seeking damages for the use of their name, image and likeness. Claims were dismissed and the dismissal was upheld on appeal.
- Successfully resolved a mediated contract dispute between a collegiate conference and a major media distribution company with respect to a contractual future rights clause.
- Assisted in the successful defense of an antitrust claim against the National Federation of State High School Associations and the National Collegiate Athletic Association made by a baseball bat manufacturer alleging Bat-Ball Coefficient of Restitution restrained trade in the non-wood bat market. The United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit issued a unanimous opinion affirming the antitrust claims' dismissal, reaffirming the National Federation of State High School Association's role in setting rules for high school competition.

## Linear and Digital Media Rights Agreements

- Structured and negotiated the television rights content acquisition from a collegiate sports league on behalf of a regional sports network.
- Negotiation of numerous complex multimedia rights agreements with ESPN/ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox, Turner Sports, Facebook, Stadium and Twitter for collegiate sports content for various collegiate conferences and other content holders, spanning decades and representing billions of dollars of license fee revenues.

- Formation and negotiation of a complex operating and venture capital financial structure of a first national internet distribution outlet for championship high school sports content on a nationwide basis.
- Represented licensors of live sports content in the ongoing transition from the traditional “wired” distribution models to the increasingly internet-based “digital” distribution alternatives.

## Sports Regulatory

- Represented a coaches association in connection with recommended modifications to the National Basketball Association draft procedures and positions on the National Collegiate Athletic Association legislation regarding agent regulation, eligibility, amateurism, recruiting, apparel company agreements, name, image and likeness, and infractions.
- Advised Collegiate Conferences regarding numerous modifications to National Collegiate Athletic Association and Conference regulatory structures.

## Employment

- Drafted and negotiated employment, sponsorship, endorsement and speaking engagement agreements for coaches, broadcasters, administrators and executives in collegiate athletics, the National Basketball Association and the National Football League.
- Coordinated with national executive search firms regarding searches for major sports executives, conference commissioners, athletic directors and coaches. Negotiation of numerous employment relationships and agreements with respect to structuring and documentation of complex deferred compensation agreements.

# Publications

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August 25, 2025

### **Assessing Strategies For Mixed-Use Pro Sports Projects**

*Co-Author, Law360*

2025

### **Esports Employment Contracts**

*Co-Contributor, Esports Law and Practice*

August 13, 2024

### **NBA’s \$76 Billion TV Deal Features Unique Role for In-House Team**

*Quoted, Bloomberg Law*

March 17, 2024

### **Five Tips Female Attorneys Need to Hear Today (And Every Day) to Thrive in Sports Law**

November 15, 2022

### **Polsinelli Names Timothy Browne Chair of Sports Industry Group and Leane Capps Co-Vice Chair**