

Sports

Cozen O'Connor has curated a multidisciplinary team of attorneys with decades of collective experience in the sports law arena, offering sports industry clients a full spectrum experience for their legal needs. Our attorneys represent clients working in all sectors of the industry, including professional and amateur teams and organizations, team owners and executives, professional leagues, professional and amateur athletes, agents and agencies, venues and arena management companies, corporate sponsors, and sporting equipment manufacturers.

We have purposefully built a well-balanced group that provides a full range of litigation, corporate/transactional, immigration, regulatory, and intellectual property services to our sports clients. One of the great benefits of working with Cozen O'Connor is our flexibility. As a well-known trial firm, we regularly represent sports clients in business litigation. Also, our nationally recognized corporate and intellectual property practices provide counsel on matters ranging from stadium development, ownership investment to trademark prosecution.

For example, our team has been at the helm of long-term partnership agreements between professional teams and renowned names in the corporate sphere, as well as nine-figure litigation involving some of the biggest names in sports. We have helped players resolve crucial immigration matters, and we have helped clients navigate compliance traps when marketing through social media. With both a deep and wide bench of attorneys with significant sports industry experience, we stand ready to assist with any issue that arises.

Beyond our mastery of the legal and regulatory aspects of the sports industry, Cozen O'Connor brings an extensive network of relationships to every engagement—and a deep appreciation for the power of relationships in this sprawling but deeply connected industry. Many of our practitioners have been working on behalf of sports clients for decades, so we are often able to make introductions, foster partnerships, and identify opportunities for mutual benefit. Because of this work, Cozen O'Connor is exceptionally attuned to issues of reputation and zealously protects the public image of every client.

CLIENTS

- Leagues and other governing bodies
- Major and minor league franchises
- Club owners and ownership groups
- Coaches and team executives
- Professional and amateur athletes
- Players associations
- Agents and agencies
- Venues and arena management companies
- Corporate sponsors
- Equipment manufacturers
- Sports media content and technology providers

SERVICE AREAS

Litigation

- Represent sport clients in complex commercial litigation and contract disputes
- Handle antitrust claims for plaintiffs and defendants
- Conduct sensitive internal investigations and lead civil, administrative, and criminal proceedings
- Counsel and defend clients in all manner of labor and employment litigation



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Related Practice Areas

- Antitrust & Competition
- Corporate
- Employee Benefits & Executive Compensation
- Employment Litigation
- Gaming
- Intellectual Property
- Labor & Employment
- Labor Relations & Disputes
- Mergers & Acquisitions
- Private Client, Trusts and Estates
- Private Equity
- Public & Project Finance
- Real Estate
- Tax
- Trade Secrets, Restrictive Covenants, and Computer Abuse
- Trademark & Brand
- White Collar Defense & Investigations

Industry Sectors

- Gaming

Corporate/Transactional

- Serve as outside general counsel to major sports franchise and arena owners
- Lead mergers, acquisitions, and joint ventures, including team acquisitions
- Negotiate private equity and other complex financings
- Lead public and project finance deals; serve as bond counsel on stadium financings
- Represent clients in major real estate transactions and sports facility development
- Negotiate executive and player contracts
- Advise clients on business development, media initiatives, and marketing strategies
- Counsel clients on relevant regulations from telecommunications to tax to utilities law
- Provide estate and tax planning to high-net worth individuals
- Handle foundation and nonprofit formation
- Counsel on immigration law issues

Intellectual Property

- Conduct all forms of intellectual property litigation and dispute resolution
- Negotiate sponsorship, endorsement, merchandising, and licensing agreements
- Negotiate the sale or purchase of media rights, media catalogues, or name and likeness rights
- Counsel clients on the right of publicity and right of privacy
- Represent clients on trade secret, counterfeiting, and price discrimination issues
- Lead trademark, copyright, and patent enforcement actions
- Provide comprehensive portfolio management and counseling

Experience

Represented the Philadelphia Union in launching a multi-year partnership with Penn Medicine that spans the entirety of the Union organization, with Penn Medicine providing the official team doctor, as well as becoming the official health care provider, hospital system, and adult cancer treatment center of the Philadelphia Union, Union II, Union Academy, and the WSFS Bank Sportsplex.

Won a motion to dismiss on claims of gross negligence and breach of fiduciary duty brought by a mixed martial arts practitioner against a strength and conditioning coach whom she blamed for losing a title fight in the Ultimate Fighting Championship.

Obtained a favorable settlement on the eve of trial, after successfully moving to strike all asserted defenses, for a sports management company in a dispute that arose when an amateur baseball player stopped paying the company the portion of the gross salary and bonuses he received from his first contract with a major league baseball team as required under the parties' professional services agreement.

Represented the Pittsburgh Riverhounds Soccer Club in connection with obtaining a P-1 visa for a player from Ghana.

Represented the Philadelphia Union in the negotiation of a long-term partnership agreement with Molson Coors Beverage Company, a renowned brewer and beverage company with a diverse range of popular brands. Under the new partnership, Coors Light is the Official and Exclusive Domestic Beer Partner of the Philadelphia Union and Subaru Park.

Represented WSFS Bank in its negotiation of a naming rights agreement with the Philadelphia Union under which WSFS became the official bank of the Union and the official bank of Subaru Park. The deal also made WSFS Bank the lead sponsor of the WSFS Bank Sportsplex.

Represented Footprint, LLC in connection with a long-term deal pursuant to which the Phoenix Suns'

newly renovated arena will be known as the Footprint Center. The deal has been called the “most unique partnership in all of sports” as it goes well beyond naming rights. Footprint is a leader in developing sustainable, plant-based products with the goal of eliminating single-use plastics. The Footprint Center will feature many of Footprint’s products, and will also serve as an innovation hub where other consumer product manufacturers can feature their products and sustainable solutions.

Represented a building materials supply company in signing a long-term agreement to be a founding partner sponsor of the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Represented a supermarket chain in signing a long-term agreement for its convenience store arm to be a sponsor of the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Represented Capital Region NLL, LLC in its acquisition of the National Lacrosse League's New England Black Wolves, moving the to-be-renamed team from the Mohegan Sun Arena in Uncasville, Conn. to Albany, N.Y., where it will play in the Times Union Center. Capital Region NLL is an ownership group comprised of high-profile members of the lacrosse community including Oliver Marti, Joe Dowling, Brett Jefferson, Sol Kumin, Zach Schreiber and Russ Sheppard. As part of the engagement, we successfully negotiated approval from the National Lacrosse League to transfer the franchise, as well as approval of the new ownership and home venue for the team. This transaction follows on the 2014 sale of the Philadelphia Wings lacrosse franchise to Mohegan Sun, in which the firm represented the ownership group, led by Brad Brewster, Michael French and Ted Goldthorpe, who continues to be represented by the firm and has an ongoing investment in the lacrosse franchise. This transaction drew on the experience of the firm's corporate, tax, real estate, and labor and employment attorneys.

Represented Pittsburgh Knights, LLC, the leading esports franchise and entertainment company in Pittsburgh, in its closing of a venture financing from North Shore Entertainment Works, LLC, an affiliate of the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Represented six Major League Baseball teams and 12 associated coaches in a \$100 million trade secret case in Florida state court relating to methods for pitching a baseball.

Represented the National Football League’s Carolina Panthers in connection with various sponsorship and advertising agreements.

Assisted a professional sports league commission and ownership group with contractual negotiations and strategic planning.

Represented a professional sports league and team in connection with Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA) compliance and related issues regarding social media marketing materials.

Coordinated and managed numerous immigration matters related to professional athletes expediting their green card status with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other governmental agencies.

Advocated before the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) for a professional soccer player’s eligibility to participate for participation in the U.S. Men’s National Soccer Team.

Negotiated and reviewed contracts and related commitments between the City of Philadelphia and host venues for the United Bid of Canada, Mexico, and the United States to host the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Worked with an investment group on the financing, purchase, and letter of intent for the acquisition of a professional English soccer team and commercial development of related real estate.

Served as U.S. bankruptcy counsel for the Ottawa Senators when they filed bankruptcy in Canada, with ancillary proceedings in the United States.

Represented the Pittsburgh Penguins in various real estate and bond financing matters.

Represented Madison Square Garden and its ownership in various litigation, including premises liability matters.

Represented a number of professional teams in Pittsburgh in premises liability matters and physical assault cases, and provided risk management advice and counsel to the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Served as national defense counsel for the National Hot Rod Association, and defended the association in two wrongful death lawsuits stemming from crashes during racing events.

Served as counsel to the largest food and beverage service provider, which provides food and beverage service to the overwhelming majority of sports venues in the United States, and represented this provider in numerous actions arising out of liquor liability, food and beverage litigation, labor and employment, and other matters.

Represented an NHL franchise in litigation to recover payments due from an entertainment entity under a sponsorship agreement. Shortly after the complaint was filed, the entertainment entity paid all principal amounts due.

Represented Caesars Entertainment Corporation and related entities in litigation stemming from a serious accident that occurred during a horserace at Harrah's Philadelphia Casino & Racetrack. We settled the matter on terms favorable to the client after jury selection.

Won summary judgment on behalf of Big Ten Network in its defense of a patent infringement case centering on a mobile streaming application through which users can watch Big Ten Conference games on their mobile devices. In granting our motion, the court agreed that there was no literal infringement of the patent at issue and that the plaintiff was estopped from arguing infringement under the doctrine of equivalents. This result was affirmed by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

Counsel to Minnesota Wild Hockey Club, LP in connection with \$110 million National Hockey League - league-wide credit facility with Citigroup.

Represented a sports representation agency in endorsement contract litigation against a former agent and a former player.

Represented a sports management agency with regard to financings for professional athletes.

Represented professional athletes in estate planning and foundation development.

Represented a sports representation agency in connection with a large private equity financing.

Represented an investment bank in connection with a \$50 million bridge financing to fund the construction of an NFL team's new home field.

Represented several NHL teams and related companies in financing transactions.

Represented an NBA team in connection with a league-wide credit facility.

Represented two major banks in an NFL stadium financing transaction.

Represented an NHL club in an employment dispute with its former general manager that was arbitrated before the league commissioner.

Represented the majority owner of an NHL club in an ownership dispute arbitrated before the league commissioner.

Assisted an international sports and entertainment company with the sale of minor league baseball teams and a professional hockey team.

Represented a major sports league's players' association in the enforcement of intellectual property and publicity rights of the union and individual players during the liquidation of assets of a former trading card company.

Advised an NFL team on real estate, stadium development, and premises liability issues.

Defended an NBA player in a multiple defendant complex civil wrongful death action.

Represented an NBA star in contract litigation over an endorsement deal with an athletic company.

Represented a PGA player and related entities in contract litigation.

Represented the developer in a multi-hundred-million dollar project financing of the home arena of both an NBA and an NHL team.

Served as bond counsel to a major U.S. city on the interim and long-term financing of its football and baseball stadiums.

Represented high-profile NFL, NBA, and NHL players in various trademark, domain name, cybersquatting, and counterfeiting disputes.

Represented NASCAR in trademark and employment litigation matters.

Represented a well-known baseball star who was the subject of an investigation by Major League Baseball into the use of performance enhancing drugs.

Represented a college basketball star and a certified class of all current and former men's Division I football and basketball players in bench trial against the NCAA for allegedly violating federal antitrust law by unlawfully foreclosing former players from receiving any compensation related to the use of their images and likenesses in television broadcasts, rebroadcasts, footage clips, and video games.

Served as primary outside counsel to an international sports and entertainment company that owns an NHL franchise and 20,000-seat home arena; provides arena management services through an affiliate to dozens of premier arenas, civic and convention centers, stadiums, and trade centers throughout the United States, Canada, Middle East, and Southeast Asia; owns a food and beverage service provider and management company; owns a full-service ticketing agency; and owns and manages other sports and entertainment subsidiaries. The firm has handled a wide range of legal issues, including ownership matters, financings, acquisitions and dispositions (such as of sports teams and franchises), commercial disputes and litigation, intellectual property matters, and real estate transactions.
