

Entertainment and Sports

The worlds of entertainment and sports have been converging for some time, to the point where they are now, effectively, the same industry. At the same time, the combination of disruptive new technologies and radically new modes of audience involvement has made change itself the main driver of the activity in these fields. In this sense, our work in entertainment and sports is a natural extension of our long history of advising change agents in a multitude of industries. Our attorneys represent a wide range of sports, entertainment and media companies — from global entertainment giants to start-up sports leagues to independent producers — in both advisory and transactional roles.

Connecting to Audiences

The common thread that unites our clients is their need to reach and interact with audiences. They are creating new businesses in the face of accelerating changes, many of them existential. Against this uncertain backdrop, they turn to us to help create and maintain strong connections to their audiences, even as those audiences change consumption habits in drastic and unpredictable ways. We identify their goals, prioritize their concerns, and help them understand the legal and regulatory risks they face. With those risks in mind, we draft and implement their agreements with venues, sponsors, athletes, entertainers and the many vendors and stakeholders in their orbit. We negotiate television, film and digital programming agreements; publishing and celebrity contracts; and arena events, naming rights and sponsorship agreements of every sort. We guide our clients in a music industry that has gone from a disc and radio business to one embedded in social media, fitness and connected technology.

Managing Drastic Change

As the lines between these industries continue to blur, fresh business models emerge, bringing new legal and regulatory challenges with them. Our clients — many of whom are themselves agents of change — count on us to help them navigate new streaming services, new social media platforms, new types of content, new distribution channels and frequent shifts in the economic fundamentals of their deals. Having long been at the forefront of the shift from traditional to digital media, these disruptive forces in the sports and entertainment environment are, to us, completely familiar. We are uniquely positioned to help clients go where their boldest impulses take them. We help them design and launch new sports leagues — in the process redefining what a “sport” is — and we help clear the way for boldly innovative forms of event sponsorships and brand associations. They trust us to point out their business and legal risks, address their compliance obligations, and work with them to manage the vast uncertainties — present and future — that they encounter in this insistently dynamic environment.

Representative Matters

- Negotiated multi-year talent contracts with top NFL and NBA athletes on behalf of an innovative e-sports tournament app to help drive awareness and visibility.
- Advising a professional sports league, as it accelerates its growth and reach both domestically and abroad. Our work has included advice and negotiation of critical event, sponsorship and media rights agreements.

- Counseling an American professional league as it emerges from a season disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic to a period of renewed growth and expansion. Guiding our client in its expansion into storytelling and content production that charts the rise of this red-hot sport.
- Advising a tennis legend in a new business venture to license name, image and likeness rights to ensure the preservation of a ground-breaking legacy.
- Advised a global sponsor on navigating the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee's Rule 40 Guidelines governing the sponsorship of Olympic athletes. Rule 40 was substantially rewritten for the Tokyo Olympics, creating unique challenges for both athletes and sponsors in promoting their relationship during an unprecedented Olympic Games.
- Represented an American video game developer on worldwide compliance issues and drafting of rules for its multiplayer online role-playing game contests.