

## PROFESSIONAL SPORTS TEAM PRACTICE

### OVERVIEW

We have substantial experience advising professional sports teams and their owners. Members of BCLP's Sports & Entertainment Group, which include a former in-house senior counsel for the National Football League who worked directly with each of the NFL's 32 member clubs, currently represent and/or have represented 31 National Hockey League (NHL) clubs, over 20 international football (soccer) clubs across seven countries, including 8 Premier League clubs and a number of La Liga and other international football (soccer) league clubs, and several Major League Baseball (MLB), Major League Soccer (MLS), National Basketball Association (NBA) and National Football League (NFL) clubs and/or their owners. We regularly represent professional sports teams and their owners in connection with their litigation, arbitration and dispute resolution matters (including their music licensing disputes); their naming rights and sponsorship matters (including their jersey sponsorship, betting and gaming industry sponsorship and cryptocurrency category sponsorship matters); the sale and purchase of sports teams, investments in and ownership of sports teams and venues and expansion and relocation matters; the development, leasing and operation of their stadiums and event venues; complex financing projects; and a variety of television, radio, streaming and other broadcast agreements and suite license, concession, retail and other commercial agreements, among other matters. We have significant experience with all aspects of our professional sports team clients' businesses.

### CONTRACTUAL AND COMMERCIAL MATTERS

We have substantial experience in drafting and negotiating contracts for our sports clients, including television, radio, streaming and other broadcast contracts, naming rights and sponsorship agreements (including jersey sponsorship, betting and gaming industry sponsorship and cryptocurrency category sponsorship matters), suite license agreements, concession agreements, retail agreements and executive and player contracts.

### LITIGATION, ARBITRATION AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

We regularly advise professional sports teams and their owners in connection with high stakes litigation, arbitration and dispute resolution. We handle sports and entertainment industry class action litigation; high profile depositions of presidents, GMs, owners and former players of professional sports clubs; arbitrations of ownership disputes and executive disputes and player arbitrations; contractual and other commercial disputes, including with respect to recovery of

unpaid sponsorship, suite license and other fees; music licensing disputes involving alleged copyright infringement; defamation matters; privacy matters (including specific privacy advice, as well as intervention both pre-publication and post-publication, while also acting on data related issues, reputation management and protection for corporate organizations in this sector); internal investigation matters; player injury insurance claims; enforcement of terms of financing related to international football (soccer) club player transfers; third party rights in international football (soccer) club players and various communications matters, including phone hacking, social media management and player anonymity matters. We have extensive experience in advising and/or appearing before Commissioners of professional sports leagues, major regulatory bodies such as FIFA and The Premier League and numerous international tribunals, including Rule K arbitrations (contractual disputes and regulatory requirements under the Football Association's regulations), CAS arbitrations, FIFA hearings and High Court disputes in England and Wales, among others.

## SPORTS AND EVENT VENUE REAL ESTATE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATION

We have extensive experience in connection with the development, leasing and operation of stadiums, arenas and other event venues and with infrastructure matters. We are considered one of the leading law firms in the world, and are the top ranked law firm in the United Kingdom, across real estate law, including with respect to a variety of planning, construction, commercial and litigation matters. With significant experience across the United States, in the United Kingdom and across Europe, Asia and the Middle East, we have the skills necessary to handle all aspects of these projects, having served as lead counsel in connection with a number of high profile event venue projects around the world.

## NAMING RIGHTS AND SPONSORSHIP

With naming rights representations with an aggregate value of over \$5.25 billion, we are among the most active law firms in the world in naming rights transactions, and we also are recognized as one of the leading sports sponsorship practices.

## MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

We have significant experience in advising clients in connection with acquisitions and sales of, and investments in and with, professional sports teams in each of Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer, the NBA, the NFL and the NHL, various Premier League and other international football (soccer) clubs, the Pacific Coast League and various minor league baseball teams.

## SPORTS AND EVENT FINANCING

We have extensive experience in connection with complex financing projects related to professional sports, including experience related to club acquisition finance, complex financial restructurings and insolvency advice, loan sales, securing regeneration grants, state aid and the public market listing of a sport business, as well as financing of future cash flows and receivables related to naming

rights and sponsorship fees, ticket and broadcast revenues, commercial arrangements and installments of player transfer payments.

## MEET THE TEAM



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## **EXPERIENCE**

### **CONTRACTUAL AND COMMERCIAL MATTERS**

- Represented a number of sports clients, including the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim and St. Louis Blues Hockey Club, in connection with negotiations of television contracts, including contracts involving broadcasts on ABC, CBS, ESPN/ESPN2, FOX Sports, NBC, OLN, Versus and CBS Radio

- Advised a variety of sports industry clients in connection with various concession, food and beverage, catering, merchandise and other agreements involving professional sports teams in each of Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer, the National Basketball Association, the National Football League and the National Hockey League
- Represented the St. Louis Blues in player contract negotiations with Wayne Gretzky
- Represented the Los Angeles Galaxy in player contract negotiations with David Beckham
- Represented the St. Louis Blues and its affiliates in connection with agreements related to the 2020 NHL All Star Game, 2019 Stanley Cup Final, 2017 NHL Winter Classic and various NCAA, Southeastern Conference (SEC) and Missouri Valley Conference men's college basketball tournaments
- Represent several current and former professional team owners and athletes, including current or former MLB, NBA, NFL, NHL and IndyCar professionals, in connection with various business, transactional, tax, estate planning and charitable foundation matters
- Represent charitable foundations with respect to various nonprofit, tax, corporate and intellectual property issues
- Represent numerous sports clients with respect to player insurance matters
- Advised numerous sports and entertainment clients in connection with a variety of matters related to COVID-19, including with respect to the impact of COVID-19 on their existing agreements, updating new agreements to address the anticipated impact of COVID-19 on future seasons, their COVID testing services agreements and other matters

## LITIGATION, ARBITRATION AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

- Representing 30 National Hockey League clubs in connection with concussion matter
- Represented an NHL club in connection with an executive arbitration matter in front of NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman
- Represent another NHL club in connection with various arbitration matters in front of NHL Commissioner Bettman
- Represented the St. Louis Blues in connection with various dispute resolution matters involving players, coaches, team executives, the NHL and other NHL teams (including former player Scott Stevens and former coach Mike Keenan, among others)
- Represent four NHL clubs in connection with litigation matter

- Represent two NHL clubs in connection with separate litigation matter
- Successfully served as trial counsel in a \$350 million contract damages dispute and a \$100 million class action matter successfully decided in favor of the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim
- Representing multiple professional sports teams in connection with various music licensing disputes involving alleged copyright infringement
- Handled salary arbitrations for the St. Louis Cardinals throughout the 1980s and 1990s, including in the successful arbitrations with players such as Ozzie Smith, Vince Coleman and Todd Zeile as well as many cases in which the Cardinals prepared for arbitration but settled
- Acted for Newcastle United FC in bringing an action against FIFA and the FA arising from Michael Owen's injury while on international duty, which led to a change in insurance rules and regulations
- Acted for Rio Football Services Hungary KFT in bringing a multi-million Euro claim in the High Court of London against Seville Football Club to enforce the terms of a financing agreement relating to a professional international football (soccer) player

## SPORTS AND EVENT VENUE REAL ESTATE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATION

- Advised the St. Louis Cardinals in connection with their Ballpark Village development
- Recently advised on the development, relocation and construction of new stadiums or related infrastructure, including mixed-use venues in four different sports, including work ranging from inception and planning to compulsory purchase, construction, opening and operation
- Advised in relation to the development, redevelopment or relocation of stadiums for multiple Premier League and Championship football (soccer) clubs
- Advised various clients in connection with the development, financing, leasing and/or operation of several stadiums and event venues, including Edward Jones Dome (former home of the St. Louis Rams - NFL), Foxboro Stadium (former home of the New England Patriots - NFL), Red Bull Arena (New York Red Bulls - MLS), Enterprise Center (St. Louis Blues - NHL) and Toyota Park (Chicago Fire - MLS)
- Served as lead counsel to the developer of The O2 World Arena, home to Berlin's professional hockey and basketball teams, and the related entertainment district, handling all aspects of the project, including site selection and acquisition, environmental due diligence, rezoning, demolition, infrastructure, development and lease negotiations



- Served as lead counsel to the developer of STAPLES Center (now known as Crypto. com Arena), home to the Los Angeles Lakers, Clippers, Kings, Sparks and Avengers, handling all aspects of the project, from real estate acquisition and rezoning to naming and sponsorship rights and financing
- Advised on various legal aspects relating to the design, procurement, planning, financing and operation of the FA's National Football Centre at St. George's Park, which is seen as integral to the future of the FA, driving elite performance in football (soccer) in England and Wales, and the heartbeat of Club England for years
- Served as lead counsel to the developer of T-Mobile Arena, home of the Vegas Golden Knights, in connection with the construction and permanent financing of the arena
- Served as lead counsel to the developer of The Home Depot Center (now known as Dignity Health Sports Park), home of the Los Angeles Galaxy and Chivas USA, handling all aspects of the project, from real estate to naming and sponsorship rights
- Represented various sports clients in connection with various concession, food and beverage, catering, merchandise and other agreements related to the operation of arenas and stadiums which are home to professional sports teams in each of Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer, the National Basketball Association, the National Football League and the National Hockey League
- Represented various sports teams in connection with their project ground leases and facility use agreements
- Represented various sports teams and stadium owners in connection with their negotiation of sports betting agreements

## NAMING RIGHTS AND SPONSORSHIP

- Counseled teams and corporate sponsors in connection with sponsorship transactions involving teams in Major League Baseball, the MLS, the NBA, the NFL and the NHL, including the Baltimore Orioles (MLB), Chicago White Sox (MLB), Cleveland Guardians (MLB), Columbus Crew (MLS), Denver Broncos (NFL), Detroit Red Wings (NHL), Golden State Warriors (NBA), Inter Miami CF (MLS), Kansas City Chiefs (NFL), LAFC (MLS), Los Angeles Angels (MLB), Los Angeles Chargers (NFL), Los Angeles Dodgers (MLB), Los Angeles Rams (NFL), Milwaukee Bucks (NBA), Minnesota United (MLS), New York Islanders (NHL), New York Knicks (NBA), New York Mets (MLB), New York Rangers (NHL), Pittsburgh Steelers (NFL), Seattle Seahawks (NFL), St. Louis Blues (NHL), St. Louis Cardinals (MLB), Texas Rangers (MLB) and Vegas Golden Knights (NHL), including various jersey sponsorship, betting and gaming industry sponsorship and cryptocurrency category sponsorship transactions

- Represented various sponsors in relation to arrangements with international football (soccer) club personalities, club shirt and stadium sponsorships and advised a number of leading international football (soccer) club stars in connection with their sponsorship activities
- Handled naming rights agreements with respect to each of Acrisure Stadium (Pittsburgh Steelers), Amerquest Field (now known as Globe Life Field) (Texas Rangers), Bank of America Stadium (Carolina Panthers), Citi Field (New York Mets), Coors Field (Colorado Rockies), Enterprise Center (St. Louis Blues), Fiserv Forum (Milwaukee Bucks), GEHA Field at Arrowhead Stadium (Kansas City Chiefs), The Home Depot Center (now known as Dignity Health Sports Park) (Los Angeles Galaxy), Honda Center (Anaheim Ducks), Oracle Arena (Golden State Warriors), Pepsi Center (now known as Ball Arena) (Colorado Avalanche and Denver Nuggets), Progressive Field (Cleveland Guardians), Qwest Field (now known as Lumen Field) (Seattle Seahawks), SoFi Stadium (Los Angeles Rams and Chargers) and STAPLES Center (now known as Crypto.com Arena) (Los Angeles Lakers, Clippers, Kings, Sparks and Avengers)

## MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

- Advised numerous clients in connection with acquisitions and sales of, and investments in or with, professional sports teams, including the Anaheim Ducks (NHL), Arizona Coyotes (NHL), Arizona Diamondbacks (MLB), Chicago Fire (MLS), Colorado Rapids (MLS), DC United (MLS), Denver Broncos (NFL), Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim (MLB), Los Angeles Kings (NHL), Los Angeles Lakers (NBA), New England Patriots (NFL), New Jersey Devils (NHL), New York Yankees (MLB), NY/NJ Metrostars (MLS), Phoenix Suns (NBA), St. Louis Blues (NHL), St. Louis Cardinals (MLB), St. Louis Rams (NFL) and Vegas Golden Knights (NHL), and various prospective investors in potential expansion MLS teams
- Advised River City Baseball Investment Group, LLC and the Savage Family on sale of the Sacramento River Cats Triple-A Minor-League Baseball Club and Sutter Health Park to the Sacramento Kings and Arctos Sports Partners, the largest minor league baseball club sale in history
- Acted on acquisition financing and re-financing for two current Premier League football (soccer) clubs, acquisitions for two current Championship League clubs and various international football (soccer) club acquisitions in Belgium, Uruguay and Brazil
- Advised a major international football (soccer) club investor in relation to a number of complex cross-border arrangements to effect the international transfers of international football (soccer) players, including by putting in place joint ventures between clubs and third party investment agreements, requiring local and international corporate tax and broader corporate finance advice

- Advised numerous clients in connection with acquisitions and sales of, and investments in, numerous arenas and event venues, including Red Bull Stadium in New Jersey, STAPLES Center (now known as Crypto.com Arena) in Los Angeles, T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas and The O2 Arena in London

## SPORTS AND EVENT FINANCING

- Advised on over U.S. \$1 billion of financing deals in international football (soccer) in the past two years
- Acted for a lender on a large amount of broadcast receivables financing work involving international football (soccer) clubs in Spain and Germany, with the Spanish transactions involving the acquisition by the lender of the rights to future broadcast payments by forward funding the amounts at a discounted rate
- Represent numerous Premier League clubs in connection with a large amount of receivables finance work
- Represent numerous clients in connection with international football (soccer) club player transfer installment financings involving some of the largest transactions in international football (soccer)
- Acted on acquisition financing and re-financing for two current Premier League clubs
- Represented Las Vegas Arena Owner (a joint venture of affiliates of MGM Resorts and Anschutz Entertainment Group) in connection with the \$200,000,000 financing of the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas
- Represented St. Louis Blues Hockey Club in connection with NHL credit facility
- Advised a secured creditor on the consensual financial restructuring and sale of Reading Football Club to a Thai consortium and acted on the provision of additional bridge finance to ensure that the Club could meet various payment deadlines and to provide working capital
- Represented developer of The Home Depot Center (now known as Dignity Health Sports Park) in Carson, California, handling all aspects of the project, including financing as well as the related restructuring
- Represented developer of STAPLES Center (now known as Crypto.com Arena) in Los Angeles, California, handling all aspects of the project, including financing as well as the related restructuring
- Represented the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim in connection with their credit facility

- Representation of owner of sports arena in \$160,000,000 senior secured syndicated revolving and term loan credit facilities
- Acted for Rio Football Services Hungary KFT in bringing a multi-million Euro claim in the High Court of London against Seville Football Club to enforce the terms of a financing agreement relating to a professional football (soccer) player

## RELATED INSIGHTS

Awards

October 22, 2021

**Chambers UK 2022**

News

Sep 17, 2021

**Sports & Entertainment Group Advises XBTO in Jersey Sponsorship Agreement with Inter Miami CF**

BCLP advised firm client XBTO, a global leader in cryptofinance, in its high-profile jersey sponsorship deal with Inter Miami CF of Major League Soccer, beginning with the club's next game at home against the New York Red Bulls on Friday, September 17. The XBTO logo will also be prominently featured at DRV PNK Stadium.