

# How to Play Sports Law for a Living

## by Jenny L. Klitch

If you're considering a sports-related legal career, begin by examining what "sports law" means to you and how you can find a niche in an industry encompassing a broad range of substantive legal and sports issues. Honing your legal skills, developing a substantive area of expertise, staying abreast of legal and sports trends, networking, and developing communication skills will improve your chances of securing a sports law career.

As a former professional athlete, and now an attorney and president of an attorney search firm, I often receive requests for advice about how to fashion a sports law career. To that end, I have compiled the following do's and don'ts for aspiring sports law attorneys. Many of the tips come from professionals who play sports law at the highest levels.

**Do examine what sports law encompasses and where you might find your niche.** The term "sports law" encompasses a variety of substantive legal areas that intersect with amateur and professional sports. So you'll need to identify the substantive aspects of law and sports in which you're interested and for which you're suited. And, as with any legal project, undertaking comprehensive research is the best way to identify the legal skill sets required by various sports-related opportunities. The day-to-day legal tasks and job duties required by a career as a sports agent, university counsel, law firm attorney, or in-house counsel for a sports team, players' association, media entity, or sponsorship entity will vary. The job may range from negotiating an athlete's major league contract to determining international intellectual property rights among numerous sophisticated entities.

**Don't expect to practice sports law all the time.**

Some attorneys dream of practicing sports law all day, every day. The reality, however, is that most positions with a sports-related entity involve a primarily "traditional" legal practice, with a smattering of issues that are directly sports-related. By way of example, Susan L. Greenfield, vice president-legal of Palace Sports & Entertainment, Inc., and vice president-legal of the Detroit Pistons basketball team, reports that she spends most of a typical day providing general corporate legal services. She estimates that only one-third of her time is devoted to sports law issues.

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