

The Award Criteria

- Candidate may be a lawyer or non-lawyer and must have at least five years experience in sports law or a sports field in general. Candidate does not have to be currently active in the sports industry. Award can be made posthumously.
- Candidate exhibits “service-above-self” attitude. This would have been demonstrated by a record of community involvement, public service, or other engagements that clearly have had a positive, motivating effect on others.
- Candidate must be regarded as a person with high integrity and ethics and possess the qualities held in highest regard by those in the field of sports law.
- Candidate must have a consistent record of presenting the practice and/or theory of sports law in a positive light to the sports world and the public in general.

Nomination Process

- Nominations are accepted from active members of the Sports Lawyers Association and members of the Selection Committee.

Selection Committee

- The Selection Committee is, at a minimum, composed of three representatives of the association. At the discretion of SLA’s president, the Selection Committee can be expanded to include not more than seven members, and one member of the committee serves as chairperson.

Presentation of the Award

- The Award of Excellence is presented during the Sports Lawyers Association Annual Conference.

Public Relations

- The Sports Lawyers Association engages in focusing attention on the award through its contacts with the sports media and sports broadcast industry.

Previous Award Recipients:

1991 — Alan I. Rothenberg
1992 — Anita L. DeFrantz
1993 — Lloyd E. Shefsky & John F. Wendel
1994 — Gary Bettman & Jay Moyer
1997 — Reuven J. Katz
2000 — Stanley H. Kasten
2004 — Marvin J. Miller
2005 — Paul J. Tagliabue
2007 — Alan H. (Bud) Selig
2008 — Donna A. Lopiano, BS, MA, PhD
2009 — Jerry Reinsdorf
2010 — Jerry Colangelo

SLA Officers

Robert E. Wallace, Jr., President
Gordon I. Kirke, Immediate Past President
Peter Roisman, Secretary
Ash Narayan, Treasurer
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Sports Lawyers Association

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2011 Award of Excellence



Gene Upshaw



2011 Recipient: Gene Upshaw

Gene Upshaw served as the Executive Director of the National Football League Players Association for more than 25 years following a successful 16-year career as a player. Throughout his tenure, Upshaw worked diligently at enhancing, protecting and defending the individual rights of professional football players in the National Football League.

During his NFL career, Upshaw was actively involved in three player strikes as a player representative. As executive director, he led the NFLPA through the 1987 strike as well as the landmark 1993 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) and the four CBA extensions that followed. Upshaw also served as Chairman of National Football League Players Incorporated, the NFLPA's marketing and licensing subsidiary.

A perennial All-Pro offensive guard for the Oakland Raiders, Upshaw was elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1987, his first year of eligibility. He played in 217 league games and appeared in seven Pro Bowls. He was named AFC Lineman of the Year in 1973 and 1974, voted top lineman in the NFL in 1977, and was runner-up for that same honor in 1980. He is the only player in NFL history to play in three Super Bowls with the same team in three different decades—the 1960s, 70s and 80s. In 1994, he was named to the NFL's 75th Anniversary All-Time team, celebrating the best players from the first 75 seasons.

During his playing career, Upshaw was a team captain, while also serving as an NFLPA player representative and officer for 13 years. He served as alternate representative or player representative for the Raiders from 1970 to 1976 and was a member of the executive

committee from 1976 through 1980 when he was elected president of the NFLPA, a post held until 1983.

As an officer of the NFLPA, Upshaw took part in all negotiations leading up to the 1977, 1982 and 1993 CBAs between the NFLPA and the NFL, and its extensions in 1996, 1998, 2002 and 2006.

During Upshaw's tenure as NFLPA executive director, the union experienced unprecedented growth and achieved free agency in professional football through landmark antitrust litigation. Further, players received increases in their salaries, improvements in playing conditions and saw major improvements in their medical and retirement benefits, including a 50% increase in pension benefits under Upshaw's leadership. As part of the 2006 CBA extension, Upshaw also negotiated a new benefit to assist retired players suffering from dementia, named "Plan 88", in honor of John Mackey. This program was created to provide resources to former players and their families for the ongoing care and treatment of this debilitating disease affecting many elderly people.

In 1994, Upshaw made the NFLPA a leader among players' associations by creating the first for-profit corporation for player group licensing. Upshaw served as chairman of National Football League Players Incorporated, also known as NFL PLAYERS, while it expanded beyond the typical association licensing activities. NFL PLAYERS is currently involved in the creation, ownership and marketing of special events, promotions, publishing, and recording and broadcasting projects, just to name a few of its groundbreaking achievements.

Upshaw received numerous community service awards throughout his career. In 1980, he was the recipient of the prestigious Byron "Whizzer" White Humanitarian Award for outstanding contribution to "team, community and country." He led a campaign for NFL players to raise \$1 million for the United Negro College Fund Scholarship program in 1995, and in 1996

received the Frederick D. Patterson Award, UNCF's highest honor for service. Also in 1996, Upshaw shared Sport in Society's Giant Steps Award for Civic Leaders with then-NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue. In 1998, he was the recipient of the United States Sports Academy Distinguished Service Award. Upshaw was a Walter Camp Foundation Distinguished American Award recipient in 2000 and in 2001 received the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America Humanitarian of the Year.

In addition to the recognition he received for his community service efforts, Upshaw was highly acknowledged for his service as NFLPA executive director. In 1982, he was honored with the A. Phillip Randolph Award for significant accomplishments as one of the outstanding black leaders in America. He was among the "Top 100 Most Powerful People in Sports" in the 1993 edition of *Sporting News* magazine and was frequently recognized on *Ebony's* 100 Most Influential Black Americans list. He was named to *Black Enterprise Magazine's* 30 Most Valuable Professionals in the Business of Sports in 1995 and was listed as one of the Most Powerful African-Americans in Sports by the publication in 2005.

To commemorate Upshaw's dedication and professionalism on and off the field, the Manheim Touchdown Club announced the creation of the Gene Upshaw Division II Lineman of the Year Award in 2004. This award is given annually to the top junior or senior lineman in the country.

Upshaw received his Bachelor of Science degree from Texas A&I University in 1969. He also conducted post graduate studies at both Golden Gate University and Lincoln University.

Upshaw is survived by his wife, Terri, and his sons, Eugene Jr., Justin and Daniel.