SLA MONTHLY Highlight Reel

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SPORTS LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

From Lawyer to Leader: Kevin Warren Headlines Friday Lunch at SLA Conference

By Anna Giambelluca, Esq.

The Friday lunch at this year's Sports Lawyers Association Annual Conference will feature a conversation with Kevin Warren, moderated by former SLA president Bobby Hacker as part of the Leadership Series. The session is expected to provide a substantive discussion on how legal training can inform leadership across multiple sectors of the sports industry.

Warren's career offers a particularly strong example of that progression. He began in private legal practice before transitioning into athlete representation, later serving as Commissioner of the Big Ten Conference, and now as President & CEO of the Chicago Bears.

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Ackerman to Retire as BIG EAST Commissioner

The BIG EAST Conference announced that Commissioner Val Ackerman will retire effective Aug. 31, 2026, concluding a 13-year tenure marked by the league's modern resurgence.

Ackerman, the conference's fifth commissioner, is a past recipient of the Sports Lawyers Association's Michael Weiner Award of Excellence. Ackerman was hired in 2013 following the reconfiguration of the BIG EAST into a basketball-focused league. Under her leadership, the conference reestablished itself as one of the premier brands in

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The Ask

If you're headed to Chicago for #SLAC26, be part of our Annual Year in Review Conversation. We want to hear from you: What do you think the most significant legal developments have been since May of 2025?

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Cooley – Platinum Sponsor the 2026 SLA Conference

Cooley's "Sports+ Practice is a dynamic, full-service group of more than 100 attorneys throughout Cooley's offices in the US, Europe and Asia." That capability extends to "traditional sports properties (professional and collegiate teams and conferences, leagues and associations), and everything that comes along with that ecosystem (including team sales, financings, investments, sponsorships, licensing and individual athlete representation)."

This year, the firm shares that capability with the entire sports industry by participating as a platinum sponsor of the SLA Conference. To learn more, we visited with Mike Sheetz, the co-chair of Cooley's Sports+ law practice, who has more than 30 years of experience representing some of the top sports organizations and sports adjacent businesses in the US in a wide variety of matters.

Question: Tell us more about your sports practice group and some of the areas you can assist clients with?

"Sports+ at Cooley also includes representation of all manner of sports adjacent businesses from wearables to sports gambling and predictive markets, to ticketing platforms, active wear brands and the widest variety of sports tech. We help clients acquire, activate, protect, and monetize their sports-related assets. And increasingly, we're advising clients on how AI is reshaping everything from on-field performance analytics to ticketing and fan engagement."

Question: What are some of the categories of clients that you work with (for example: coaches, leagues, etc.)?

"We serve the full spectrum of the sports industry including professional sports teams and owners in the NFL, NBA, MLB and many newer professional leagues and teams. We have also been active for years in the collegiate space with clients like the Pac-12. Cooley's Sports+ practice includes brands, sponsors, and advertisers, media companies and broadcasters, sports-tech startups, emerging ventures and their investors, and high-net-worth individuals and funds investing in sports properties. We also represent senior executives in the sports world on employment and contract matters."

Question: Why did you decide to participate in the SLA conference this year?

"The Sports Lawyer's Association is the place to be for sports lawyers and Cooley is proud to be a sponsor. The SLA has given our lawyers the opportunity to learn from the best minds in the industry, but also to actively contribute through panels and committees. We feel strongly about the SLA's commitment to promoting opportunities for members of its affinity groups and building a real community in sports law. That aligns deeply with our values at Cooley. When you have a chance to invest in the future of this profession at an event of this magnitude, you show up."

Perkins Coie – Platinum Sponsor the 2026 SLA Conference

Perkins Coie's Sports industry group partners with clients at the intersection of traditional sports and innovative technology, "helping them pursue strategic and revenue growth that advances the future of sports, media and entertainment."

Given that expertise, the firm intensified its participation in the sports industry this year as a platinum sponsor of the SLA Conference. To learn more, we visited with Kirk Soderquist, Chair of the Digital Media and Entertainment and Sports group.

Question: Tell us more about your niche in the sports industry?

"Our work increasingly centers on venues of the future - complex initiatives such as new venue construction, entertainment district redevelopment, naming rights and premium partnerships, connected-infrastructure deployments, and fan-data and privacy programs that underpin modern, experiential facilities.

"Known for cross-disciplinary strength and a sustained commitment to the sports industry, our team advises on the unique commercial, regulatory, and operational issues facing the sports industry. We guide clients through the full venue lifecycle, from site selection and public-private development to design, construction, and long-term operations, addressing cutting-edge issues such as mixed-reality fan experiences, dynamic ticketing and payments, in-venue connectivity, data governance and privacy, accessibility and safety, sustainability and ESG goals, IP and content rights, and next-generation sponsorship and media monetization.

"We work with professional and collegiate sports teams, leagues and conferences; sports technology companies; media platforms and providers; venue developer and operators; and governmental organizations, positioning Perkins Coie as a leader in the evolving sports law landscape. Our core work includes:

- Broadcasting and streaming rights negotiations
- Stadium and venue construction, modernization, tech enablement and biometric implementation
- Technology integration for fan engagement and revenue generation
- Regulatory and employment investigations and compliance
- Corporate governance and dispute resolution
- Privacy, biometrics, and data protection
- Sponsorship, marketing, and NIL agreements"

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Question: What are some of the categories of clients that you work with (for example: coaches, leagues, etc.)?

"Perkins Coie represents a broad range of clients, including major league teams (MLB, NFL, NBA, NHL, MLS), collegiate institutions, sports technology companies, broadcasters, streaming platforms, regional sports networks, real estate developers, and venue operators. The firm has delivered results on multi-billion-dollar media rights agreements, RSN distribution, and large-scale technology integrations for leading teams and venues."

Question: Why did you decide to participate in the SLA conference this year?

"The SLA conference has been an important part of our Sports group's marketing efforts for many years. Our Digital Media and Entertainment, Gaming and Sports industry group (DMEGS) recognizes the intersection between media, sports and technology that enables us to uniquely meet our sports clients where they are I the marketplace. The SLA will continue to be an important part of our go-to-market strategy."

Summize – Gold Sponsor the 2026 SLA Conference

As a Contract Lifecycle Management (CLM) solution, Summize is "the AI contracting layer that powers the business with embedded knowledge in the tools where work happens."

This year, that capability becomes available to the sports industry in a big way with the company's arrival as a platinum sponsor of the SLA Conference. To learn more, we visited with Summize's Rebecca Wood.

Question: Tell us about your approach?

"It's an embedded approach, which enables commercial teams from all types of sporting organizations to self-serve on the low-risk, high-volume contracts in the tools they already know and love – Outlook, Gmail, HubSpot, Teams and Slack – all while legal retains full oversight and powers their contract intelligence to the next level using AI-powered insights on top of foundational workflows.

"Many sports teams across the NBA, NFL, MLS, MLB, FA, and Formula One, already use Summize to streamline their contract management and governance across the whole business."

Question: What makes the company different from its competitors?

"Summize is known for our embedded approach. By embedding directly into everyday business tools such as Outlook, Teams, Slack, Gmail, Salesforce and HubSpot (rather than requiring non-legal teams to log into another tool) Summize meets teams where they already work, driving adoption across the business while giving legal the control, structure and efficiency they need."

Question: What attracted you to a sponsorship of SLA?

"At Summize, we're already a partner to many sports teams and organizations across a range of leagues, enabling each one to move faster, stay compliant, and protect commercial value across every contract. We're sponsoring SLA to show those who haven't yet experienced Summize the contracting power and intelligence we bring to both legal and non-legal teams."

Question: What trends are you tracking in the space in 2026 and why?

"In 2026, we're enabling our customers to take their AI use in contracting from adoption to augmentation. For legal teams, this is all about capturing legal knowledge within workflows so that routine tasks like contract approvals, compliance checks or standard drafting can be handled confidently by the wider business, while underpinned by legal's guardrails. Meanwhile, lawyers can focus on higher-value, strategic work such as advisory services, risk management and complex negotiations.

"Using our AI contracting layer within our CLM solution, sports teams can tap into functionality such as custom AI agents – the next biggest feature enabling sports lawyers to securely query, decipher and act on governing body regulations, league policies and your own agreements at scale."

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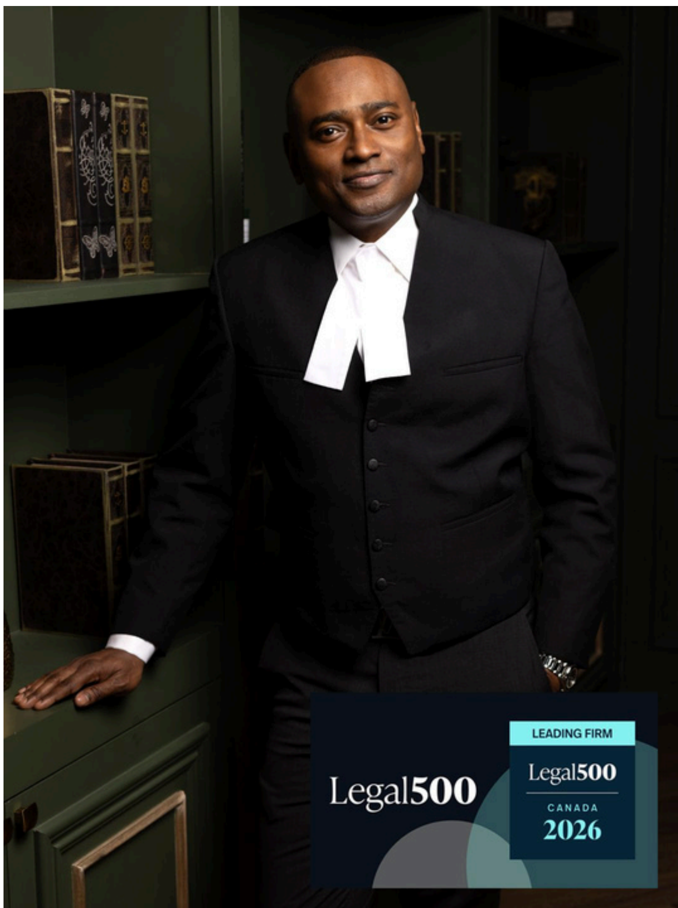
Gafoor, Lucentem Recognized by Legal 500 Among Canada's Top Sports Law Firms

Layth Gafoor, founder of Lucentem Sports & Entertainment Law, has been named a Top Lawyer in Sports & Entertainment Law by Legal 500, while his firm earned recognition as one of Canada's Leading Law Firms in the category.

The distinction places Lucentem among just eight firms nationwide to receive the honor, and notably, the only firm on the list dedicated exclusively to sports and entertainment law. The rankings are based on independent market research and client feedback, underscoring both the firm's subject-matter expertise and its reputation among clients.

Gafoor, a sports and entertainment executive and general counsel at hxouse, has built a career at the intersection of law, business and culture. In addition to leading Lucentem, he serves as an adjunct law professor and recently completed his term as president of the Sports Lawyers Association, reflecting a broader commitment to advancing the profession.



In announcing the recognition, Gafoor credited the firm's focused approach and client relationships as key drivers of its success.

"This distinction reflects the strength of our work and the high degree of client satisfaction we strive to deliver," he said. "Being the only firm in this group that practices exclusively in sports and entertainment law is a testament to our team's passion and specialized expertise."

Lucentem advises clients across the sports and entertainment industries on a range of legal and business matters, positioning itself as a boutique firm with a targeted, industry-specific practice.

Gafoor said the firm remains focused on building on its momentum in the year ahead, emphasizing continued client service and growth in a rapidly evolving sector.

Survey Yields Ten Ways *Sports Litigation Alert* Can Be Used in the Classroom, as a Complement or In Place of a Textbook

By Anna Giambelluca, Esq.

Sports law presents a built-in teaching challenge. The field itself evolves quickly—courts are almost constantly addressing questions about athlete rights, institutional liability, gender equity, labor relations, and league authority. Yet the primary teaching tool in many classrooms remains the textbook, which is effectively frozen in time at the moment it is published.

This creates a gap between how sports law is taught and how it is actually experienced in practice. By the time a case appears in a textbook, the legal and business landscape surrounding it may have already shifted. For students preparing to enter the industry, that lag can make it difficult to connect doctrine to the realities they will face.

Sports Litigation Alert (The Alert) was designed, at least in part, to address that disconnect. Published biweekly, it tracks current litigation across professional, collegiate, and amateur sports through case summaries, legal analysis, Q&As, and an archive that stretches back years.

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A recent survey of The Alert subscriber-educators finds it showing up in syllabi at institutions across the country, in ways that have expanded well beyond reading and discussion. Some professors have stopped assigning a textbook altogether and made The Alert the primary course material. Other professors assign The Alert as supplemental material or as personal reading material for students to stay aware of sports law updates to prepare themselves for future careers.

Why It Works

Respondents were asked what they find most valuable about The Alert and the answers consistently pointed to one thing: its timeliness.

"The world of sports is ever changing," **Professor Taren Moore** of East Carolina University wrote. "Our textbook provides precedent and case law for several policies and rules that are in place. The Alert provides students with the opportunity to see how these policies/rules are handled in the current landscape."

As another professor simply put: "Real-time, real-world examples of what's happening in sports [law]."

This focus on real-time application is not new. Prior work on sport law pedagogy has emphasized the importance of moving students beyond simply understanding doctrine and toward applying it in practical settings. As one professor explained, tools like The Alert allow students to engage with "real life, timely application of legal theories" and develop the ability to think on their feet when working through unresolved disputes.

In practice, that shift often shows up in how academics structure their classrooms. Professors describe incorporating mock trials, group-based case analysis, and exercises that require students to take positions on active disputes—forcing them to apply legal principles as they would in practice rather than simply identifying them in hindsight.

The case summaries themselves drew consistent praise—described as "excellent with good depth"—and several respondents noted that The Alert adds context to classroom topics in ways a textbook cannot.

Accessibility also emerged as a key advantage. **Professor Rachel Silverman** from the University of Nebraska Kearney noted that "undergraduate students find the case summaries easy to read and understand," particularly compared to traditional casebooks. The Alert effectively does the translation work, allowing instructors to spend less time decoding legal language and more time developing legal reasoning.

Adjunct Professor Carla Varriale-Barker of Columbia University writes, "The Alert is a valuable practice and educational tool, I depend on it to be kept abreast of developments across the country. As a sports law professor, It is the perfect tool to engage your students," she said. "It is written in a way that undergraduate and graduate students can understand it, while at the same time delivering enough substance that I think it is a resource for lawyers."

Ten Ways Professors Are Using SLA in the Classroom

The survey asked respondents to describe how they incorporate The Alert into their courses. Their responses reflect a range of approaches, but all share a common goal: connecting legal concepts to real-world current application.

1. **Textbook Replacement** – Some instructors, like **Professor Elizabeth Galloway** of Stetson, assign The Alert in place of a traditional textbook. The subject matter quarterly publications and accessible format with the archive make it viable as a standalone resource, particularly at the undergraduate level. **Professor Galloway** shared her syllabus here.
2. **Supplemental Reading** – The most common approach. Casebooks provide foundational doctrine; The Alert provides what has happened since. Students read current issues alongside traditional assignments, connecting doctrine to live developments. **Former Professor Linda Sharp** states, "although a great sport law text is an important aspect, the law is so dynamic that we need a reliable source for timely updates with cases and analysis. The Alert provides those updates." **Professor Galloway** also makes reading assignments, which she graciously shared an example of here.
3. **Mock Trials** – **Professor Steve McKelvey** of the University of Massachusetts uses The Alert to structure in-class mock trials where students argue current sports law disputes. Teams represent plaintiffs and defendants, submit legal briefs using The Alert and its archives, and present arguments and rebuttals before the class. The exercise builds legal research, writing, and oral advocacy skills while requiring students to apply doctrine to active, unresolved cases. (See full exercise description here: *Pedagogy in Sport Law Classes: Using Sports Litigation Alert Effectively and Creatively)*
4. **Class Discussion Driver** – Instructors, including **Professor Topher Davis** of University of La Verne, assign recent cases or articles and use them to anchor in-class discussion, often tying directly to course topics.
5. **Polling Exercise** – **Professor Gary Chester** of Montclair State University wrote, "I reference cases and take a student poll on what the outcome should be." Presenting the facts of a real case and asking students to predict the outcome allows them to apply legal doctrine in real time.
6. **Current Events** — Several professors structure dedicated

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current-event conversations around The Alert content, either in small groups or full-class settings, encouraging engagement with ongoing disputes.

7. **Research Papers and Case Comparisons** – The Alert's archive allows students to track how similar legal issues evolve across multiple cases, making it especially useful for written assignments. As **Professor Brian Crow** of Slippery Rock University explained, "Students, generally in groups of two, must research a broad legal topic area, putting it into historical perspective, showing current examples of its application, and projecting how they will be able to use this knowledge in their careers. I encourage them to use the SLA archives as a resource and a starting point, although many (to their regret) choose to conduct Google or other Internet searches first."
8. **Take Home Assignments** – Some professors use The Alert as the basis for structured take-home assignments that require students to engage more deeply with recent cases and articles. **Professor Ted Curtis** of Lynn University has students select recent The Alert court-decision articles across different segments of the sports industry and evaluate both the legal holding and its broader fairness, governance, and justice implications. Dr. Silverman of the University Nebraska - Kearney takes a similar approach. "In the assignments, students must find an The Alert article related to a case we talked about recently involving negligence, Title IX, etc. They summarize that case, then find a similar case on The Alert and compare the outcomes of the cases. They discuss what was similar and different in each of these cases and the court's decision." Dr. Silverman provided her syllabus **here** and assignment example **here**.
9. **Final Project Resource** – **Professor Anthony Giacobbe** assigns a final project requiring students to analyze a pending sports law dispute. "The Alert is a great source for helping them select and learn about the case."
10. **Career Development Tool** – Several professors frame The Alert not as just coursework, but as a professional habit. **Giacobbe** stated, "I advise students that they need to be on top of sports news for their careers and that [The Alert] is a fantastic publication that gives them more in-depth information than they will get from other sources."

What the Numbers Show

When asked how they integrate The Alert, professors most frequently selected class discussion prompts and combined in-class and homework assignments. Supplemental reading and research-based uses were also widely cited. In terms of content, case summaries, Q&As, and quarterly publications were the most commonly assigned components, while a significant number of instructors also incorporated the archive for deeper research.

The variation reflects how instructors are tailoring The Alert to their course goals—some emphasizing immediacy, others leveraging its historical depth. One respondent teaching an asynchronous online course noted that students "enjoy finding an article that interests them each month and then responding to their peers," suggesting the material resonates beyond required assignments.

Where Things Stand

The professors in this survey are preparing students for a sports industry actively being reshaped by litigation. NIL cases are redefining the economics of college athletics. Courts are grappling with whether student-athletes should be classified as employees. State gambling laws continue to shift.

A traditional casebook cannot keep pace with those developments in real time. Instructors who have built The Alert into their courses are giving students something a textbook cannot: exposure to the law as it is actively developing. As one respondent put it, The Alert is "very timely" and "adds more context to topics we cover in class." In a field where many of the biggest questions are still being worked out, that kind of context matters.

Instructors can explore taking a subscription to The Alert by visiting https://sportslitigationalert.com/subscriptions/

Anna Giambelluca is an Austin-based attorney and proud alumna of the University of Texas at Austin, where she completed both her undergraduate and legal education. Her work focuses on the intersection of college athletics, athlete advocacy, and sports law.

Warren

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While each role carries distinct responsibilities, the underlying foundation remains consistent. Legal principles—particularly those related to contracts, risk management, governance, and strategic decision-making—have continued to shape his approach at every stage.

The conversation is expected to focus on how those principles evolve as responsibilities expand. Moving from representing individual clients to overseeing conferences and professional franchises requires a shift in perspective, from advocating for a single interest to balancing institutional priorities across a wide range of stakeholders.

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That transition is often difficult to conceptualize in the abstract, and Warren's experience provides a concrete framework for understanding how that shift occurs in practice.

This discussion also comes at a time when the business of football, and the sports industry more broadly, is undergoing significant change. Developments in media rights, ongoing questions surrounding labor and compensation, and the financial and political considerations tied to stadium development continue to reshape the landscape. Warren's involvement in these areas, across both collegiate and professional settings, positions him to offer insight that is both practical and timely.

In addition to these broader industry issues, the session is expected to include reflection on the key decisions and professional transitions that defined Warren's career. That aspect of the discussion is likely to resonate with students and early-career attorneys, as it provides a clearer sense of how opportunities develop and how legal training can be leveraged in less traditional roles within sports.

More broadly, the Friday lunch reflects the strength of the SLA conference as a whole. It brings together legal analysis and real-world experience in a way that is both accessible and directly applicable to those working in or entering the field. In an industry that continues to evolve at a rapid pace, conversations like this offer valuable perspective on how lawyers can contribute to, and lead within, increasingly complex organizations.

Registration for the conference remains open for those interested in attending.

Ackerman

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college basketball, highlighted by four men's national championships and sustained NCAA tournament success.

Conference officials credited Ackerman with securing long-term media partnerships and strengthening relationships with key stakeholders, including FOX Sports and Madison Square Garden. The BIG EAST also expanded its media footprint through agreements with NBC, TNT Sports and ESPN+.

"It's been an extraordinary honor to serve," Ackerman said in a statement, noting the conference's stability and growth during her tenure.

Before joining the BIG EAST, Ackerman served as the founding president of the WNBA and held leadership roles with USA Basketball and the NBA. Her career spans nearly four decades across collegiate and professional sports.

Ackerman said she believes the conference is well-positioned for the future, citing strong leadership across member institutions and long-term business agreements already in place.

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Trump Signs Executive Order to Regulate College Athletics

By Drew Schott, of Tulane Sports Law

On April 3, 2026, President Donald Trump signed an executive order addressing various issues facing college sports, nearly a month after announcing his plans to write a directive within a week that would "solve all of the problems" facing college athletics. The executive order, entitled "Urgent National Action to Save College Sports," calls for the NCAA to update its eligibility and transfer rules by August 1, 2026. Trump's order also advocates for the protection of women's and Olympic sports and the prohibition of agreements organized by collectives that pay student-athletes more than the fair market value of their NIL rights.

The executive order advises the NCAA to limit student-athletes' participation in college athletics to "no more than a five-year period" and that they be allowed to transfer once during this timeframe. If a student-athlete earns a four-year degree, the order permits them to transfer one additional time. Trump's executive order also blocks professional athletes from returning to college sports. Additionally, it seeks to expand scholarships and opportunities in women's and Olympic sports and prevent schools' revenue-sharing plans from reducing scholarships in these sports. Regarding the compensation of student-athletes, the order seeks to bar "improper financial activities" including pay-for-play agreements and regulate NIL collectives, which it characterized as a "fraudulent NIL scheme." Trump also looks to ban schools from using federal funds for NIL, revenue-sharing and coaching payments, as well as nullify conflicting state laws. If schools or conferences do not follow the order, Trump proposes the reduction of a university's federal funding.

Trump originally announced his plans to write an executive order focused on college athletics during the "Saving College Sports" roundtable at the White House on March 6, 2026. Roughly fifty politicians, sports executives, conference commissioners, and athletic directors were present, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio and NCAA President Charlie Baker. A key goal of Trump's executive order is creating a bipartisan federal solution, since it "calls on Congress to quickly pass legislation to address these critical issues." One option is the Student Compensation and Opportunity through Rights and Endorsements (SCORE) Act, which has the support of lawmakers and influential figures across college athletics. The SCORE Act would grant antitrust protections to the NCAA and conferences and prevent student-athletes from becoming employees of their schools. However, it is uncertain whether the SCORE Act will advance because it has twice failed to reach the floor of the House of Representatives for a vote. Additionally, the bill does not currently have the necessary votes to pass in the Senate.

"President Trump recognizes the critical role of American college sports in fostering leadership, education, and community pride, and that decisive action is needed to address urgent threats to its future," The White House stated in a fact sheet about the executive order. Following the order's announcement, multiple lawyers who work with schools and student-athletes told ESPN that judges would find it unconstitutional and unenforceable if it was opposed in court. Additionally, it is uncertain how effective Trump's executive order will be on the college sports ecosystem. Trump previously released a directive called "Saving College Sports" in July 2025 and eight months later, a university official told Yahoo Sports that they are "still waiting for any enforcement of the first [executive order]."

Injunction Request Denied for Virginia Quarterback in Lawsuit Against NCAA

By Thomas Nash, of Tulane Sports Law

On April 2, 2026, the Charlottesville Circuit Court in Virginia denied the injunction request for Virginia Cavaliers quarterback Chandler Morris's seventh year of college football eligibility. This is the result of Morris's lawsuit, initially filed on February 24, 2026, seeking an extra year of college eligibility, joining fellow NCAA quarterbacks Trinidad Chambliss and Joey Aguilar this year in the endeavor.

In 2020, Morris began his collegiate career at the University of Oklahoma. He transferred to Texas Christian University in 2021 as a starter, but was injured at the start of the season and totaled only twenty-six snaps as a backup to Max Duggan in three games. While he had sought a medical redshirt for the season, the NCAA counted it as a full year of eligibility because of his participation in three games and his redshirt status in 2021. He entered the transfer portal in December of 2023 and played for a year at North Texas before transferring to Virginia ahead of the 2025 season. Morris sought a seventh year of eligibility with his lawsuit in February, with his attorneys claiming that his limited snaps at TCU were a part of a medically prescribed treatment plan for mental health. The NCAA denied his medical redshirt waiver and appeal in January of this year, and the Charlottesville Circuit Court now denies his injunction request for an extra year under center for the Cavaliers. This decision comes only weeks after fellow NCAA quarterback Trinidad Chambliss was granted an injunction for his extra year of eligibility after the NCAA denied him a sixth year of eligibility and

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a medical redshirt waiver.

"The NCAA is pleased by the court's decision today, which protects the integrity of collegiate competition," said the NCAA in a statement after the decision. Representing Morris are JP Kernisan and Ben O'Neil of Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan, LLP in Washington, D.C., who have yet to publicly comment at this time.

Terry Rozier Seeks Dismissal of Federal Betting Charges

Editor's Note: There have been developments on the Rozier case, with new charges being leveled against the protfessional athlete, which can be found [here](#).

By Hailey Bell, of Tulane Sports Law

On December 23, 2025, Miami Heat guard Terry Rozier filed a motion to seek a dismissal of federal charges that arose out of an alleged sports betting scheme. In the filing, Rozier's attorney Jim Trusty challenged the legal basis of the government's case, contending that Rozier's alleged conduct does not meet the threshold for federal wire fraud or money laundering.

Rozier was arrested on October 23, 2025, and was charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud and conspiracy to commit money laundering. Prosecutors allege that Rozier told his codefendant, Deniro Laster, that he would leave a game while playing for the Charlotte Hornets. Laster then allegedly sold that information to known bettors. Rozier pleaded not guilty to the charges. The motion to dismiss centers on a Supreme Court ruling that limits federal fraud prosecutions and holds that failing to disclose economic information that could influence decision-making does not constitute a federal crime. Using that ruling, Rozier argues that neither Rozier nor the bettors violated federal law. He argues that any wrongdoing would fall under state law's sports betting regulations. Also, Rozier contends that prosecutors were incorrect in describing the alleged conduct as insider betting or game rigging. According to the motion, the indictment discusses activity that violates sportsbook terms of use, such as wagering based on non-public information rather than criminal fraud. The approval or denial of the motion to dismiss will greatly depend on how the federal judge interprets the scope of the Supreme Court's ruling and whether the alleged conduct meets the legal standard for federal fraud. If the court grants the motion, the charges could be dismissed in whole or in part. In that case, the court would likely give the prosecution a chance to prove the alleged schemes can be prosecuted under federal law. If the court denies the motion, the will proceed to pretrial litigation and, potentially, a trial, where the prosecution will still have to prove that the alleged schemes violated federal law.

___ "The indictment does not allege that Mr. Rozier ever placed a a bet, whether himself or through a proxy, on any NBA game," Rozier's attorney, Jim Trusty of Ifrah Law in D.C., wrote in the motion to dismiss. "Nor does it allege that he knew that Laster intended to sell this information to others, or that using it to place wagers would violate the Betting Companies' rules." The prosecution maintains that Rozier's alleged actions violate federal law. There has been no ruling on the motion.

Live Nation Reaches Settlement Agreement with Department of Justice in Antitrust Lawsuit

By Jake Dicker, of Tulane Sports Law

On March 9, 2026, Live Nation reached a settlement agreement with the Department of Justice over the DOJ's lawsuit alleging Live Nation held an illegal monopoly over live events. Live Nation will pay $200,000,000 and undergo structural changes that limit its exclusivity power within the live events market as part of the settlement's terms.

Live Nation and Ticketmaster, two of the country's largest live event entertainment companies, merged in 2010. Over the past 16 years, Live Nation has continued to acquire smaller ticketing companies, take ownership of concert venues, and manage artists. The ability to create exclusive contracts with its venues, so that Live Nation could then hire its own artists and, in turn, set its own ticket prices for concert-goers, has resulted in the company facing mounting criticism over the years since the 2010 merger. On May 23, 2024, the Justice Department and thirty-nine states filed suit against Live Nation and Ticketmaster for unlawful monopolization in violation of antitrust law in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. The DOJ alleged that Live Nation threatened venues that did not comply with its ticketing demands and retaliated against those venues that did not listen, in order to maintain its monopoly. In its complaint, the DOJ sought to enjoin Live Nation from continuing its alleged anticompetitive practices, require a divestiture of Ticketmaster, and obtain other relief to restore competition in the affected markets. The trial for this case began on March 3, 2026, less than one week before the settlement was reached. More than thirty states were not involved in the settlement, and as they seek relief for state-level antitrust violations, the trial is still ongoing.

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"We are happy to take greater steps to empower artists and venues in their ticketing decisions and are confident we will continue to succeed on the quality of what we deliver," said the President of Live Nation, Michael Rapino. The Justice Department, represented by Jonathan Kanter, Assistant Attorney General for Antitrust of the United States DOJ in Washington, D.C., has not commented on the settlement.

Navy Baseball Player's Temporary Restraining Order Against NCAA Denied

By Emma Fernald, of Tulane Sports Law

On March 5, 2026, Judge Julie Rebecca Rubin denied a temporary restraining order in Brock Murtha's suit challenging the NCAA's denial of a Season-of-Competition Waiver. The court held that Murtha failed to meet the standard for extraordinary relief. *Murtha v. Nat'l Collegiate Athletic Ass'n*, No. 1:26-cv-00719-JRR (D. Md. Mar. 2, 2026).

Murtha, a senior infielder at the U.S. Naval Academy, sought a fifth year of NCAA eligibility after the association counted his six-game appearance total at Notre Dame during 2021 as a full season of competition. He argues that his limited participation should not have exhausted a year of eligibility and that losing this season would hinder his leadership development before commissioning as a Marine Corps officer. The dispute followed the NCAA's denial of a waiver and its refusal to reconsider the decision after Navy missed the 30-day appeal deadline. On February 20, 2026, Murtha sued the NCAA in the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland for breach of contract and related claims, alleging the NCAA improperly refused to reopen his eligibility case. He sought damages and injunctive relief, including a temporary restraining order that would allow him to compete this season. The NCAA opposed the motion, arguing that Murtha failed to satisfy the requirements for injunctive relief.

Judge Rubin found that Murtha had not demonstrated entitlement to a temporary restraining order. She concluded that the evidence did not justify altering the status quo. Rubin emphasized that a TRO is "extraordinary relief" and cannot be used to accommodate a player's request midseason. She further noted that Murtha would still need to obtain a mandatory injunction, which she described as "very difficult, if not impossible." The court therefore denied the motion, leaving Murtha ineligible to compete this season.

"The harm I am facing is not the loss of fun or games," Murtha wrote in a declaration attached to his complaint. "It is the loss of critical leadership reps that are essential to my ability to lead Marines in high-consequence environments." Murtha is represented by Christine Brown of Christine Brown & Partners in Old Greenwich, Connecticut. The court's denial of the temporary restraining order leaves Murtha unable to compete while the case proceeds.

NFL Seeks Replacement Referees Following Unsuccessful Negotiations with the NFLRA

By Kiland Harrison, of Tulane Sports Law

On March 18, 2026, the National Football League (NFL) began looking for 150 replacement referees for the upcoming season after negotiations with the Referees Association (NFLRA) were unsuccessful. Failure to reach a deal before May 31, 2026, could trigger a lockout similar to 2012, when the NFL had to rely on replacement officials during the first three games of the season.

In 2012, the NFLRA compelled the NFL to agree to a new deal after replacement referees made a controversial call during a high-stakes Monday Night Football game. The deal allowed referees to secure long-term job security and an immediate salary increase. This time, however, the NFL is looking to make changes to the CBA by rewarding referees through performance-based incentives. On December 10, 2025, the NFL notified all teams that no agreement had been reached since negotiations began in the summer of 2024. The NFLRA strongly opposes the NFL's changes, which aim to restrict the NFL's access to its officials. The NFLRA also rejects the idea of replacement officials due to the increased vulnerability to gambling and concerns about players' safety, potentially left in the hands of less experienced officials.

"The NFL has remained focused on implementing changes to the agreement in ways that will improve the performance of our game officials, increase accountability, and ensure that the highest-performing officials are officiating our highest profile games," said NFL Vice President of Football Operations Troy Vincent and General Counsel Larry Ferazani. "Frankly, I'm surprised they would even consider it after 2012," said NFLRA executive director Scott Green. The current collective bargaining agreement is set to expire at the end of May. The two sides have yet to reach an agreement.

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University of Cincinnati Sues Ex-Quarterback Sorsby Following Transfer to Texas Tech

By Brad Hutchison, of Tulane Sports Law

On February 25, 2026, the University of Cincinnati sued its former quarterback, Brendan Sorsby, in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio's Western Division in Cincinnati for breach of contract. Cincinnati alleges that Sorsby violated his name, image, and likeness (NIL) revenue-sharing agreement by failing to pay a $1 million liquidated damages buyout upon transferring to Texas Tech University for the 2026 season.

On July 1, 2025, Sorsby signed an eighteen-month, two-season NIL contract with Cincinnati covering the 2025 and 2026 seasons, set to expire on December 15, 2026. Under the contract, Cincinnati was granted the right and license to use Sorsby's NIL in exchange for a multimillion- dollar payment. In 2025 alone, Cincinnati paid Sorsby $875,800 under its revenue-sharing model. The contract contained a liquidated damages provision requiring Sorsby to pay Cincinnati $1 million within thirty days of transferring to another university before the agreement's expiration. On December 1, 2025, Sorsby allegedly informed the football program that he planned to depart and would not play in the AutoZone Liberty Bowl against Navy on January 2, 2026. Sorsby entered the transfer portal on January 2, 2026, and on January 5, 2026, signed an NIL deal with Texas Tech, reportedly worth $5 million. In its complaint, Cincinnati further alleges that Sorsby breached a contractual obligation not to engage in promotional activities conflicting with the school's interests when his image appeared on a billboard in New York City's Times Square announcing his commitment to Texas Tech. *See University of Cincinnati v. Sorsby*, No. 1:2026-cv-00200-MRB (S.D. Ohio Feb. 25, 2026). Cincinnati seeks $1 million in liquidated damages, contending that its actual damages may in fact exceed that amount, given the value of lost NIL rights.

"Despite the clear contractual obligation to do so, and despite his ability to pay, Sorsby still has not paid the University the $1 million in liquidated damages he agreed to pay," the complaint states. Cincinnati is represented by David DeVillers and Christopher J. Bayh of Barnes & Thornburg LLP in Columbus. "Pursuing legal action against Brendan Sorsby is misguided," said Sorsby's representation from LIFT Sports Management. "University of Cincinnati, through its revenue-share structure, paid him $875,800 for a season he fully competed, and in that time, he generated millions in value for the program." Sorsby is legally represented by Joe Braun and Rick Wayne of Strauss Tory in Cincinnati. The case has been assigned to U.S. District Judge Michael R. Barrett.

NCAA Denied Appeal of Trinidad Chambliss Injunction

By Anthony J. Kolarik IV, of Tulane Sports Law

On March 5, 2026, the National Collegiate Athletic Association filed a request for permission to appeal the interlocutory order granting a preliminary injunction issued by a Mississippi state, which would enable Ole Miss Quarterback Chambliss to be eligible for a sixth collegiate year. On March 27, the Mississippi Supreme Court denied the request for interlocutory appeal, clearing the way for Chambliss to play college football this upcoming season.

On February 12, 2026, in the Calhoun County Chancery Court of Mississippi in Portsboro, Judge Robert Q. Whitwell granted Chambliss the injunction, reasoning that the NCAA's denial of eligibility was in bad faith as officials had ignored evidence of Chambliss's medical issues from early in his collegiate career. Despite this, the NCAA insisted that it consistently applies a waiver standard requiring medical records to affirmatively establish that the athlete was unable to play due to health issues, including evidence that one doctor recommended Chambliss to participate in football in 2022. In the appeal, the NCAA claimed that Judge Whitwell failed to apply the correct standard of review, which allows the athletic association's eligibility decision to be upheld even if it is unreasonable or possibly wrong, so long as it is not arbitrary and capricious. Further, it is claimed that, to ensure an even playing field among all schools, the NCAA's decisions on player eligibility must be free from trial-court intervention. The Mississippi Supreme Court ruling did not include details regarding its decision to deny the NCAA's appeal.

"Everyone remembers when the NCAA famously appealed to the Supreme Court in the Alston case and got their teeth knocked out by Justice [Brett] Kavanaugh. I expect the NCAA to be spitting chiclets in this appeal as well," said Thomas A. Mars of Mars Law firm in Rogers, Arkansas. Chambliss is represented by Mars and by William Liston of Liston & Deas in Ridgeland, Mississippi. "If courts can intervene in NCAA eligibility decisions to provide special treatment to favored athletes, then the NCAA's ability to ensure fair athletic competition in which all participants play by the same rules will depend upon the whims of trial courts throughout the country," said the NCAA. The NCAA is being represented by J. Douglas Minor, Taylor J. Askew, and Daniel J. Zeitlin of Holland & Knight in Atlanta.

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Judge Denies Motion to Strike in Ohtani Ball Dispute

By Sam Safferstein, of Tulane Sports Law

On March 9, 2026, Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Spencer Eig denied a motion to strike evidence in the ongoing dispute over the ball hit by Shohei Ohtani in his 50th home run. On September 19, 2024, Los Angeles Dodgers slugger Shohei Ohtani hit a home run against the Miami Marlins in Miami, becoming the first Major League Baseball player to record fifty home runs and fifty stolen bases in a single season. Christian Zacek left the stadium with the ball, which he later sold at auction for $4.39 million. This case evokes memories of the landmark sports law case, *Popov v. Hayashi*, in which Barry Bonds' record-breaking 73rd home run in the 2001 MLB season was split between two fans, allowing them to share the value of the ball as they both had equal possessory rights

Max Matus and Joseph Davidov each claim that they possessed the ball before Zacek gained control of it and subsequently sued Zacekin the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court of Florida in Miami, alleging claims arising from ownership and possession of the ball. Matus later moved to strike Zacek's motion for summary judgment, arguing that it relied on inadmissible video evidence and an edited screenshot that had not been properly authenticated. In response, Zacek argued that the image had been edited only to improve visibility and that the underlying video footage had been obtained directly from fans' cell phones. In a Zoom hearing, Judge Eig concluded that Matus had not shown any legal basis to strike the summary judgment motion on the ground that the image had been edited. Judge Eig rejected the argument that improving a photo's color or clarity amounted to fraud or made the evidence inadmissible. "I don't find that any law has been cited, or that improving a photo for color or clarity is fraud," Judge Eig said. "Improving picture quality doesn't seem like a problem."

"These are copies of copies," said Michael M. Gordon, counsel for Matus. "Without explaining that to the plaintiff or the court, how can we possibly respond appropriately to their motion for summary judgment?" Matus is represented by John J. Uustal, Charles Scott, and Michael M. Gordon of Kelly Uustal in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. "The motion clearly states that the photo was edited solely to better identify the blue wristband," said Ramon A. Rasco, counsel for Zacek. Zacek is represented by Ramon A. Rasco of Podhurst Orseck, P.A. in Miami, Jonathan F. Claussen of J Claussen Law, P.A. in Miami, and Dustin M. Robinson of LumaLex Law in Miami. Trial is scheduled to begin on July 20, 2026.

Major League Soccer Imposes Lifetime bans on two Former Players for Gambling on Matches

By Sam Thornton, of Tulane Sports Law

On March 9, 2026, Major League Soccer issued lifetime bans on former players Derrick Jones and Yaw Yeboah for gambling on league matches. MLS claimed that it had received suspicious betting notifications in the Fall of 2025. MLS retained the law firm Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler LLP for an official investigation.

The investigation revealed that Jones, who was part of the Columbus Crew, and Yeboah, who most recently played for LAFC and previously played for Columbus alongside Jones, were extensively gambling on soccer matches, including their own, over the last two seasons. The investigation pointed to one specific instance during an October 2024 match between Columbus and the New York Red Bulls, where both players placed a wager on Jones to receive a yellow card. Jones was issued a yellow card foul in the 35th minute of the match. In this occurrence, the league said the two players "likely shared confidential information with other bettors about their intent to draw yellow cards." However, MLS said that there was "no evidence that was identified that suggested any of these betting activities affected the outcome of the match." MLS has experienced previous turmoil with betting jurisdictions over the elimination of yellow and red cards as prop wagers. The league's efforts have proven effective. Since requesting this rule change, the number of betting jurisdictions disallowing card wagers has increased by fifteen. Currently, thirty-three out of forty-one jurisdictions do not allow foul card wagers. In addition, MLS has developed a training program to deter players from engaging in suspicious activity. Players undergo training that includes information on gambling policies and are required to sign an agreement certifying that they have completed their training.

In a statement, Columbus said it denounced the actions of Jones and Yeboah. "The Crew – who strictly adhere to all MLS policies on educating and enforcing sports gambling regulations with team personnel – fully cooperated with the league since first learning about the inquiry regarding the players in question," the statement read. "Major League Soccer remains steadfast in its commitment to match integrity," MLS commissioner Don Graber said in a statement. "The league will continue to enforce its policies, enhance education efforts, and advocate for the elimination of yellow card wagering in all states to protect the integrity of our competition for clubs, players, and fans."

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USPTO Registers 'G' Trademark to Grambling State

By Braeden Trotter, of Tulane Sports Law

On February 24, 2026, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office officially registered the stylized "G" mark to Grambling State University for use on apparel, merchandise, and athletic programs. The registration was granted after formal cooperation agreements were reached with the Green Bay Packers and the University of Georgia to address concerns about the likelihood of consumer confusion among the three institutions' similar logos.

Grambling State initially filed its trademark application in May 2025, describing the mark as a stylized black "G" within a gold oval. In October 2025, USPTO examining attorney Barbara Gaynor issued a non-final office action indicating that the application would be rejected unless specific concerns of confusion were addressed. The Green Bay Packers and the University of Georgia already held registrations for similar stylized "G" designs. To overcome this, Grambling State entered into a consent agreement with the Packers in September 2025 and a coexistence agreement with the University of Georgia in October 2025. In these contracts, Grambling State pledged to use its mark only in the black and gold colorway, specifically avoiding the color red, which is associated with the University of Georgia. Attorney Devin Ricci, Grambling State's representative, argued that these agreements should be given great weight because the parties themselves are best positioned to determine if confusion is likely.

"The USPTO should not substitute its judgment concerning likelihood of confusion for the judgment of the real parties in interest without good reason," said Ricci, of Kean Miller in New Orleans, Louisiana. The successful registration now provides the university with exclusive rights to the mark, ownership presumption, and anti-counterfeiting protections from U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

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