

SLA MONTHLY

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
SPORTS LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

Highlight Reel



Time to Sign Up for 50th Annual SLA Conference

The Sports Lawyers Association will host its 50th annual conference in Nashville May 15-17, with organizers promising “an extraordinary celebration.”

Prospective attendees can now register for the event at [as well as reserve their stay at conference hotel, the JW Marriott Nashville, **here**](#). Reservations must be made by 4/21.

“The conference is recognized globally as a premier gathering for sports lawyers, offering an unparalleled forum for legal professionals to connect and collaborate,” said Layth Gafoor, SLA President. “It’s a unique chance to immerse yourself in inspiring discussions and engage with industry experts and trailblazers who share your passion for sports and law.”

“This is not just an event; it’s an opportunity. Seize this chance to forge valuable connections, gain cutting-edge insights, and grow alongside fellow enthusiasts dedicated to shaping the future of sports law.”

The schedule begins Wednesday, May 14, at 3 p.m. with the Academic Research Paper Session and wraps up with a mid-day session on Saturday, May 17, with a panel addressing The Broad Impact of the Evolution in College Athletics. The full agenda can be viewed [here](#).

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Cooley Brings Strong Legal Expertise to the Sports Industry

Cooley is emerging as the go-to law firm when it comes to matters within the sports industry. So it's not surprising that the firm has become the Platinum Sponsor of SLA's 2025 Annual Conference. To learn more, we extended the following Q&A to the firm.

Who are the leaders of the firm's sports law practice, and how many other attorneys are involved?

Cooley's sports law practice has 50+ attorneys and is led by partner Mike Sheetz, who has represented top sports organizations and athletes across the US for many years in a wide variety of sensitive and game-changing matters. Adam Chase, partner and vice chair of the group, focuses on preparing and negotiating sports and event sponsorships, licensing and endorsement agreements, influencer and other advertising, marketing and promotional agreements.

In what areas of the sports industry does the firm focus most of its efforts?

Cooley's sports practice mirrors the firm's focus on serving the technology, venture and private equity, and life sciences sectors. Cooley has a long history of serving clients in sports, sportstech, fitness, sports betting and sports consumer products. Our major recent engagements include sensitive internal investigations, representing investors in world class sports properties and transactional work for sports clients. Clients rely on Cooley to acquire, activate, protect and monetize their

sports-related assets.

What are the key trends that the practice group is watching in 2025?

There are several key trends which will affect the sports industry in 2025 that we are focusing on. One is of course AI. Cooley represents hundreds of innovative tech companies looking to leverage AI to improve performance and analytics in everything from on-field performance to new fitness and health products, and to ticketing and other event adjacent businesses. The second key trend relates

to the new Trump Administration and how the enforcement environment and regulatory regime will change the way sports organizations and the wider sports industry operate day-to-day. Our government, regulatory and investigations practice groups are carefully monitoring the landscape and helping clients develop contingency plans as new rules come into play.

Why has Cooley embraced the opportunity of working with SLA?

The Sports Lawyers Association is the place to be for sports industry lawyers. SLA has given Cooley lawyers the chance to learn from industry leaders, but also to contribute through active participation on panels and committees. We are especially grateful for the chance to support SLA's efforts to promote opportunities and create community for members of SLA affinity groups.



Adam Chase



Mike Sheetz

SLA MEMBERS *in the News*

Yakovee, Ensor Appointed as Advisory Board Members to Greater Orlando Sports Commission

The Greater Orlando Sports Commission has announced incoming members to its Board of Directors, including Sports Lawyers Vered Yakovee and Richard Ensor, both of which are members of SLA.

Like the other members, Yakovee, who oversees Yakovee Law, P.A., and Ensor, Founder & CEO of Boardwalk Sports Event Management, will be expected to “provide leadership, influence and counsel, and play a vital role in supporting the organization’s mission on behalf of the City of Orlando and Lake, Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties.”

“As Chairman, I am proud of this organization’s ongoing success in bringing together some of the most diverse, talented, and respected leaders from our community to serve on the board of directors,” said Caesar Lopez, Chairman of the Greater Orlando Sports Commission board and Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel for Orlando City SC, Orlando Pride, and Inter&Co Stadium. “We’re excited to welcome our new members and look forward to the invaluable contributions they will make as we work together in the years ahead.”

Ensor founded Boardwalk Sports in 2023 after a distinguished 35-year tenure as Commissioner of the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC). Ensor played a

pivotal role in elevating intercollegiate sports by securing events like the NCAA DI Wrestling and Frozen Four Championships, and he was instrumental in arranging for the MAAC to host the NCAA Division I Basketball Championships. His business acumen extended into managing basketball events with the Women’s Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA), where he organized the inaugural WBCA Showcase at Walt Disney World Resort in 2024.

Prior to founding Yakovee Law, Yakovee served as Vice President and Associate General Counsel for the Miami Heat and Kaseya Center (then American Airlines Arena), and as Associate Team Counsel for the Boston Celtics.

Yakovee earned her

J.D. from USC Gould School of Law and her B.A. in Philosophy from the University of California San Diego. She taught Sports Law at Boston College Law School, ISDE in Madrid, Spain, and her alma mater USC Gould School of Law, where she also served as the founding faculty advisor for the USC Sports Law Society and taught the inaugural undergraduate Sports Law course. She currently serves as a board member for the Sports Lawyers Association



Vered Yakovee



Richard Ensor

SLA MEMBERS in the News

Brandon Wurl Named Associate Counsel at the Arizona Cardinals Football Club

Aspiring to work in the sports industry, attorney Brandon Wurl fulfilled his dream last month when he joined the Arizona Cardinals Football Club as Associate Counsel.

Wurl, who worked at Honeywell for almost three years before joining the NFL franchise, will report directly to General Counsel Kevin Manara. His role will be to “provide legal support to business units across the Arizona Cardinals and its affiliated organizations, serving as the first point of contact in the legal department for key stakeholders and support on legal matters, including drafting, reviewing, and negotiating agreements. He will also be responsible for advising and assisting on privacy matters and ad-



vertising and marketing initiatives, including sweepstakes, contests, and promotions.

“Joining the Arizona Cardinals’ in-house legal team fulfills a long-held dream of combining my passions for law and sports,” said Wurl, who is active in the Sports Lawyers Association, where he serves as co-chair of the SLA’s NextGen Committee. “This role with the Cardinals offers the chance to engage in a broad range of legal practices and issues, which I find rewarding and meaningful as a younger attorney. I

look forward to embracing this challenge and learning from some of the best in the field.”

Time To Renew for 2025

SLA membership connects you with a dynamic network filled with essential knowledge, resources, and opportunities that foster both personal and professional growth. As a member, you’ll enjoy exclusive access to:

- Monthly electronic newsletter
- Access to the yearly *Sports Lawyers Journal*
- A subscription to *Sports Business Daily*
- Discounts for both the 2025 Annual Conference in **Nashville, TN** and the 2025 Fall Symposium in **London, England**
- Continuing Legal Education credits
- Exclusive members-only programming

Don’t let this opportunity pass by—**renew or join** today and start leveraging all the incredible advantages that come with SLA membership.

TIME TO
RENEW
YOUR 2025
Membership

Former LSU Receiver Kyren Lacy Posts Bail After Arrest for Negligent Homicide

By Kate Ragusa

On January 12, 2025, former LSU wide receiver Kyren Lacy posted bail for \$151,000 following his arrest for negligent homicide, felony hit-and-run, and reckless operation of a vehicle after causing a fatal accident on a Louisiana highway. The accident took place on December 17, 2024, two days before Lacy declared for the NFL Draft. An investigation by law enforcement led to the findings that Lacy recklessly passed multiple vehicles while driving at a high speed, crossing the centerline and going into the northbound lane while in a designated No Passing Zone. Lacy spent less than two hours in Lafourche Parish Jail before posting bail.

Allegedly, on December 17, 2024, Lacy was driving southbound down LA Highway 20 when he attempted to illegally pass the car in front of him by entering into the lane carrying oncoming traffic. The driver of a pickup truck heading north abruptly braked and swerved to the right to avoid a head on collision with Lacy's Dodge Charger. Behind the pickup, the driver of a Kia Cadenza additionally swerved to also avoid impact with the Charger, but swerved to the left into the southbound lane, colliding with a Kia Sorento head-on. The passenger of the Kia Sorento, Herman Hall, a 78-year-old former U.S. Marine from Thibodaux, Louisiana, later died from his injuries at the hospital. After the crash, authorities indicated that the LSU star drove around the crash and continued down a nearby highway.



"We strongly believe that the facts will ultimately demonstrate the truth, but we respect the need for a full and thorough investigation," Lacy's agent, Rocky Arceneaux of Alliance Sports wrote in a statement posted to X. Arceneaux stated that no more comments would be made out of respect for the investigation, but emphasized, "To anyone impacted, directly or indirectly, we want to assure that this matter is being taken very seriously, and we are committed to resolving it responsibly." Lacy immediately cooperated with law enforcement, remaining in communication with state troopers and turned himself in once identified. Louisiana state officials stated that the investigation is active and ongoing and that "troopers are in communication with Lacy and his legal representation." If convicted, Lacy could face up to five years in prison and a fine of up to \$5,000.

Peter Seidler's Widow Sues In-Laws for Control of San Diego Padres

By Samuel King

Since 2020, when Peter assumed the role of chairman of the Padres and became the organization's largest stakeholder, the Padres had become one of baseball's greatest stories. Typically viewed as a team with significantly less financial flexibility than the juggernauts of the industry, Peter turned heads with his ultra-aggressive philosophy in regard to roster construction. The Padres first offseason without Peter at the helm resulted in a decreased payroll by about one-third and a deterioration of their local media contract through

Diamond Sports Group's bankruptcy proceedings. The Padres said in December that Peter's brother, John Seidler, will become the control person, pending the approval of MLB owners. According to the complaint, Sheel and the children own approximately one-quarter of the franchise, satisfying MLB's requirement of at least a 15% stake to qualify as a control person. However, Peter's brothers have "frozen Sheel out" and "deprived her of the benefits of being the largest beneficial owner of the baseball team, while themselves enjoying the benefits." For example,

the complaint notes Sheel and her three children are not welcomed in the ownership suite during the season and that Matthew and Robert Seidler have “inform[ed] Padres employees that Sheel’s presence and input are not welcome in interacting with free agents and current players,” along with excluding her from charitable events that were intended to honor her late husband’s legacy.

“[A]s the holder of the largest individual ownership stake in the San Diego Padres, and the sole beneficiary of the Seidler Trusts, which possesses exclusive rights with respect to control of the franchise, I am seeking to be named the control person for the Padres,” Sheel Seidler said in her letter. “They are trying to erase Peter’s vision and legacy...as well as falsely cast themselves as Peter’s true heirs.” In response, a spokesperson for the Peter Seidler Trust, which controls the Padres, characterized Sheel’s complaint as “entirely without merit.” They continued, saying “Peter had a clear estate plan...The plan specifically named three of his nine siblings, with whom he had worked closely with for many decades, as successor trustees of his trust and Peter him-

self prohibited Sheel from ever serving as trustee. The trustee is exclusively responsible for designating the San Diego Padres’ next control person.” Since Ms. Seidler’s filing of the complaint,

a motion was filed in response, which seeks to have some of the allegations in the suit decided by an arbitrator. Sheel Seidler is represented by Sarah Patel Pacheco, Austin K. Yancy, Cullen McDonald and Nolan R. Bedward from the offices of Jackson Walker LLP, as well as Dane H. Butswinkas, Joseph M. Terry, Noah M. Weiss and Stephen L. Wohlgemuth from the offices of Williams & Connolly LLP.



Florida State Head Basketball Coach Sued by Former Players

By Trey Schwalb

On December 30, 2024, Plaintiffs Darin Green Jr., De’Ante Green, Josh Nickelberry, Primo Spears, Cam’Ron Fletcher, and Jalen Warley filed suit against Florida State Head Basketball Coach Leonard Hamilton in the Leon County Circuit Court of Florida for failing to pay each player \$250,000 in name, image, and likeness payments. The players allege that before committing and enrolling at Florida State University, they were promised said payments but never received compensation. None of the players involved in the suit currently remain with the Florida State basketball program and have since transferred to other universities or have run out of NCAA eligibility.

The plaintiffs allege that Leonard Hamilton promised the players, as well as their family members, payment in the form of NIL deals before they committed to the program in 2023. However, as the 2023-2024 season progressed, it became increasingly clear the players would not be paid. This culminated with the players walking out of practice and claiming to boycott their upcoming game against conference rival Duke University. After this walkout,



Hamilton allegedly reassured the players and families that the money would be sent to them shortly through his “business partners.”

Plaintiffs further allege that Hamilton breached their contract, including promissory estoppel claims. The promissory estoppel claims center around the players relying to their detriment on the alleged \$250,000 promise, stating that they could have used this time to pursue other avenues, but instead attended FSU as a result of the empty-handed promise. The complaint asserts that Hamilton conducted

these “deals” over the phone rather than in writing. The plaintiffs seek a total of \$1,500,000 in compensation.

“On the advice of my attorney, I cannot provide any comment regarding the pending litigation at this time,” Hamilton said. His attorney is yet to respond to the complaint. The plaintiffs are represented by Darren Heitner of

Heitner Legal, PLLC in Fort Lauderdale. Heitner stated when asked about the case; “... They were told over and over again to essentially trust that the payments would be made ... It’s a unique opportunity for these players to earn compensation. And again, the players and their families felt that they were completely wronged in the process.”

Fox Sports Under Fire Following Bombshell Lawsuit

By Everett Honour

On January 3, 2025, Noushin Faraji, a former Fox Sports hairstylist, filed a complaint against Fox and network talents Skip Bayless and Joy Taylor, and executive Charlie Dixon. Faraji alleged numerous counts, including sexual battery, failure to prevent harassment, multiple claims of a hostile work environment, retaliation, and wrongful termination.

The following are all allegations made in the complaint: Faraji began to work with Fox Sports in 2012 and received a full-time position in 2016; after starting full time, Faraji quickly became friends with Taylor. In May 2016, Faraji met Taylor for drinks in Santa Monica, where she was introduced to Dixon. During this meeting, and several subsequent events, Faraji alleges it became clear to Faraji that Taylor and Dixon were having affairs with each other. In July 2016, Fox Sports announced that a new show (“Skip and Shannon: Undisputed”) would begin to air; Taylor was tapped to be the moderator, however, she had little prior experience at the time. Taylor allegedly had relationships with Dixon and Emmanuel Acho, another talent on the network.

The complaint further alleges the following: on January 14, 2017, Dixon allegedly inappropriately touched Faraji during a party; when she told Taylor about the incident, Taylor allegedly told Faraji to move on, as she only had her job because of Dixon. While working on Undisputed, Bayless allegedly began giving Faraji inappropriately long hugs, followed by kisses, and, eventually, pressed his body against her. Faraji allegedly attempted to halt Bayless’s advances; however, he only became more aggressive – eventually, Bayless allegedly

offered Faraji \$1.5 million to sleep with him. When Faraji again tried to stop Bayless by reminding him that he was married, Bayless allegedly made a racist remark regarding Faraji’s father and Muslim heritage. By the end of Faraji’s tenure at Fox, she had ended her friendship with Taylor. After this, Taylor allegedly began insulting Faraji on both a personal and a professional level, including allegedly mocking the pronunciation of Faraji’s last name. Faraji attempted to consult Human Resources multiple times. On August 8, 2024, Faraji was fired from Fox for alleged financial reasons. This came after her schedule was reduced following her participation in an internal investigation and supporting her co-workers. Faraji seeks compensatory damages, emotional distress damages, punitive/other damages, injunctive relief to prevent current/future harassment or retaliation from involved parties, attorney’s fees, and costs of suit. There are additional class action charges and prayers for relief.

“We take these allegations seriously and have no further comment at this time given the pending litigation,” Fox Sports responded to the allegations in a statement to Front Office Sports. Devin Abney, counsel for Ms. Faraji, stated “Our client looks forward to being vindicated and hopes this will compel Fox to take meaningful and substantial steps to address and resolve the toxic workplace that has impacted her and many of her colleagues.” Faraji is represented by Rana Ayazi and Devin Abney of Ayazi Abney APC in Los Angeles. The case currently before the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles. Faraji has demanded a jury trial; however, no current date has been set for the case.

Texas Man Arrested for Stalking WNBA Star Caitlyn Clark

By Katharina Mente

On January 12, 2025, Michael Lewis, a 55-year-old man from Denton, Texas, was arrested in Indianapolis on a Level 5 felony stalking charge. Allegedly, he was sending threats

and sexually violent messages to Indiana Fever star Caitlyn Clark through social media. The arrest took place at a hotel in downtown Indianapolis following an investigation by local police, the FBI, and Marion County prosecutors.

Lewis appeared in Marion County court on Tuesday, January 14, 2025, where he disrupted the proceedings multiple times as the charges were laid out.

Court documents reveal that Lewis sent messages to Clark on X from December 16, 2024, to January 2, 2025. These messages included threats, sexually explicit content, and statements referencing her home, Gainbridge Fieldhouse, and other locations associated with her. The FBI tracked the IP addresses used to send the messages to Lewis' hotel and the Indianapolis Public Library. Police initially contacted Lewis on January 10, 2025, warning him to stop the behavior, but the messages continued. Clark, who had never responded to the messages, told police she feared for her safety and altered her public appearance as a precaution.

"It takes a lot of courage for a woman to come forward in these cases, which is why many don't," said Marion County Prosecutor Ryan Mears. "In doing so, the victim

is setting an example for all women who deserve to live and work in Indy without the threat of sexual violence." During Lewis' initial court hearing on January 14, 2025, Judge Angela Davis entered a not guilty plea on his behalf. Judge Davis said that "at this stage, the court is going to enter an initial plea of not guilty," although Lewis announced that he was "guilty as charged." Lewis has been appointed a public defender, who will act as counsel for him in the subsequent case. When he was asked if he required an attorney to be appointed to him, he did not answer the question and instead stated that he needed his medication. Judge Davis proceeded by issuing a no-contact order prohibiting any communication with Clark, as well as a stay-away order banning Lewis from Gainbridge Fieldhouse and Hinkle Fieldhouse. Despite receiving a \$50,000 bond, Lewis stated he intended to remain in custody. A pre-trial hearing is scheduled for March 31, 2025.

Puma Files Notice of Opposition Against Tiger Woods' Sun Day Red Apparel Brand

By Julia Balot

On January 2, 2025, sportswear manufacturer Puma filed a notice of opposition with the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) against a trademark application by 15-time Major champion Tiger Woods' apparel brand, Sun Day Red. Puma alleges that Sun Day Red's logo will cause consumer confusion due to its similarities to Puma's "Leaping Cat" logo.

Since 1969, Puma has used the same "Leaping Cat" logo, which resembles a silhouette of a large cat jumping in the air. Puma is a multinational brand that provides apparel and equipment related to many sports, including golf, for which it has a separate website that sells exclusively golf products. In February 2024, Woods announced the launch of his apparel brand Sun Day Red, the logo of which is 15 lines in the shape of a leaping tiger to represent Woods' 15 championship wins. Puma's complaint claims that consumer confusion in the golf apparel market is likely to occur because both logos "convey or evoke a thought of a large cat." Puma also alleges that Sun Day Red's logo dilutes the strength and fame of the Leaping Cat logo and its ability to



distinguish Puma's brand from others.

"We feel very confident in our trademarks and logos," said TaylorMade, the company who created the Sun Day Red brand with Woods.

In its filing, Puma

stated, "Due to the confusing similarity of the marks and the identical, legally identical [and] or closely related nature of the goods and services of the parties, consumer confusion is likely between the Challenged Marks and the Leaping Cat logo." Sun Day Red is represented by Kristin G. Stojan of Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton LLP in San Diego. Puma is represented by James J. Aquilina, Xheneta Ademi, and Johanna M. Wilbert of Quarles and Brady LLP in their Washington D.C. and Milwaukee offices. The filing was presented to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in Virginia.