

sports



We put our deep bench to work to cover your legal bases

Passions run deep in professional, college and local sports, and Thompson Coburn knows how to play the game. Our Sports practice orchestrates the deals, transactions and contracts that put teams in towns, spectators in stadiums, and players in position.

Whether you need to finance a stadium, attract or retain a team, we cover all the bases. Thompson Coburn's bench includes legal stars who can go to bat for you against any legal opponent.

civic & governmental sports issues

Thompson Coburn leads public and private financing for the acquisition, construction and improvement of professional and collegiate sports facilities, stadiums, and arenas. Our public finance attorneys can act as bond counsel, issuer's counsel, underwriter's counsel, special counsel or represent a credit enhancer in sports venue transactions.

Our public finance attorneys can advise higher education institutions on the complex aspects of sports venue financing, including complicated tax issues involved with private donations from alumni or boosters. We also negotiate naming rights agreements for professional and university sports facilities and can outline sponsorship benefits such as the use of luxury suites.

As former general counsel and executive vice president of the St. Louis Rams, Sports Law Group Chair Bob Wallace managed the franchise's operations and business departments, negotiated all vendor contracts, and led all stadium lease negotiations. He served as lead negotiator in the renaming of the Rams' stadium to the Edward Jones Dome.

Franchise relocation: Our attorneys have experience with the myriad legal considerations any team faces when considering or attempting a relocation. We have the savvy negotiation skills needed to accomplish a team's business goals and help it plan for the future.

Wallace is among one of the only attorneys in the U.S. to have led the relocation of two NFL teams. He has experience in the bevy of contractual, legal and political issues that crop up for teams considering a move.

Real Estate: Working on a national scale, our real estate attorneys represent financial lenders, commercial and institutional owners, and businesses in all types of real estate transactions. We frequently collaborate with our public finance, environmental, corporate and tax attorneys to empower us to handle all facets of a real estate transaction. We can also tap into our litigation attorneys for the disposition of construction contract or other business disputes.

collegiate and university sports

Athletic programs at colleges and universities bind communities, attract students, and finance campus operations. Conference realignment and student/athlete compensation rules have changed the game. University administrators need innovative business solutions from attorneys who can help protect your institution's athletic legacy and enhance development opportunities. Backed by our robust higher education practice, Thompson Coburn is well-positioned to advise universities on the array of issues that impact their athletic programs.

Stadium Finance: Thompson Coburn maintains a large public finance practice and has decades of experience in financing projects related to the construction, expansion, and improvement of many of the region's collegiate sports facilities. Our public finance attorneys can advise higher education institutions on the complex aspects of sports venue financing and tax issues involved with alumni or booster donations. We also have experience negotiating naming rights and sponsorship benefits.

Conference Realignment: NCAA conference shakeups cause turbulence for schools. Advertising, broadcast rights, and future school revenue depend on conferences. We understand the television ratings game and know the demographics and market sizes of conferences across the country. We routinely advise college and university

general counsel and athletic directors on conference negotiations, contracts, and admission requests to new conferences.

Compliance Programs and Risk Assessment: By adopting rigorous internal compliance programs, institutions can root out problems before they create significant problems for a university's campus community, its regulatory status and alumni relations.

As universities, especially those with high-profile athletic programs, come under public and legal scrutiny, Thompson Coburn attorneys can step in to help create effective compliance programs. These may include the selection of an independent compliance office, the creating of internal protocols for reporting policy violations, internal investigations, plans for employee discipline, and proactive disclosure.

Intellectual Property Protection: Think about the amount of college sweatshirts, hats, and coffee mugs you see on a regular basis. Multiply that by millions of schools and fans, and that's a lucrative line of business. We protect and enhance the value of your school's brand with the counsel of our experienced intellectual property team. We provide patent protection and enforcement in the United States and overseas for brand names, team names, trademarks, and web domains. Our attorneys help manage and enforce large trademark portfolios and can also assist with licensing negotiations. We are also well-versed in anti-counterfeiting efforts, with strong international connections that help us respond quickly to counterfeit operations overseas or domestically. We also advise on issues related to name, image, and likeness (NIL) in student athletes.

players & agencies

When stars renew contracts or land with a new team after free agency, they reap the rewards of hard work and sacrifice. But they also juggle critical decisions about their finances, brand and future opportunities. We dish out assists on the business, financial, and investment considerations that surround professional athletes.

We sit down with athletes and families to identify business and financial priorities and determine how to achieve those goals. We serve as a legal and financial coach for athletes and liaise with their brokers, accountants and agents. Our approach results in an open, responsive relationship that protects the player's interests.

We negotiate player agreements (both in the United States and for athletes who play in leagues overseas) with care. We also help with the negotiation of endorsements and product licensing agreements, focusing on realistic marketing plans that enhance athletes' images and build their reputations. We also represent coaches and front-office sports executives to negotiate contracts and business opportunities.

Business Opportunities: Once athletes sign big contracts, everyone comes knocking with a "can't-miss" business opportunity. Our attorneys can serve as gatekeepers to identify and review opportunities for active or retired players. The goal is to provide superior legal advice on day-to-day needs and help athletes become seasoned independent decision-makers. We also can help form corporations or charitable endeavors, secure funding through capital raising and explore investment opportunities for post-playing career income.

Wealth Management: Signing bonuses and mega-deals are only as valuable as the financial and legal protections that surround them. For some of the country's wealthiest families, including sports legends, we bring in our Private Wealth attorneys, who have developed wealth management strategies with practical solutions to complex financial issues. We can help with estate planning, trusts and the creation of charitable foundations. Our international trade, commerce, and tax experience also supports a global sports market where athletes frequently play abroad or pursue business relationships with foreign companies, which create U.S. tax issues.

Agency Representation: Our team can advise sports agencies or individual agents on the blocking and tackling of their day-to-day operations, including the drafting and review of contracts and other business matters. We are equipped to assist with employment, tax, litigation and intellectual property matters.

Labor & Employment: Whether a member of a union or a free agent, an athlete and their agency face critical employment choices. Our attorneys are experienced in labor negotiations and contracts and executive compensation and can counsel on all types of employment agreements. We also can offer representation should a player encounter labor disputes, professional discipline, or other employment-related proceedings.

Intellectual Property: Athletes are their own brands, and the protection of that brand as intellectual property is critical. Our dedicated IP team helps athletes establish, protect, and enhance the value of their brands. We also advise on advertising restrictions, negotiate for rights of publicity, assist with licensing for product endorsements, and respond swiftly when any company uses an athlete's likeness without consent.

professional sports

General counsel for professional sports teams and leagues need experienced outside attorneys who can get the deal done. Thompson Coburn can provide attorneys across a variety of practice areas who do just that.

Our attorneys have led legal work on a variety of matters at the professional sports level, from stadium finance to trademark litigation. They understand that teams need solution-focused attorneys who can not only identify problems but craft legal strategies that reach a team's desired result with minimal conflict. And when conflicts do arise and litigation is needed, our nationwide litigation practice is positioned to respond.



Stadium Finance and Lease/Vendor Agreements: We have deep experience in financing projects related to professional sports facilities, and our public finance attorneys can act as bond counsel, issuer's counsel, underwriter's counsel, special counsel, or represent a credit enhancer in sports venue transactions. When it comes to the team's vendors, including for concessions, merchandise, security, media broadcast rights and parking facilities, we can provide critical reviews of the many agreements and contracts required. And when it's time to negotiate or renegotiate a stadium lease or naming rights, we are here to help.

Labor & Employment/Immigration: We can help pro teams with all types of labor and employment issues, including background checks and hiring practices, discipline and discharges, safety and OSHA issues, and sexual harassment investigations. Our labor and employment attorneys also review handbooks and policies for compliance and draft employment agreements. We offer responsive, highly personalized immigration advice and ensure the smooth transition of any international players, coaches or staff.

Intellectual Property & Anti-Counterfeiting: We provide patent protection and enforcement in the U.S. and overseas markets for brand names, team names, trademarks, web domains, and more. Our attorneys have helped global companies manage and enforce large trademark portfolios, and can also assist with licensing negotiations.

Vigilant trademark enforcement can be a smart – and revenue-increasing – investment for professional sports teams. Our intellectual property attorneys can develop successful strategies to respond to counterfeiters around the globe. We have extensive experience in anti-counterfeiting efforts and can negotiate contracts with overseas manufacturers to help enforce your rights in a foreign legal system. If counterfeit goods do trickle into the United States, we can create a custom program that enlists the assistance of U.S. Customs agents. We can act just as swiftly when a company suspects a U.S.-based counterfeiting operation, perhaps spurred into production by a major sporting event or finals game.

Our experience working with professional sports teams makes us a key player in their most complex deals and contracts.

We help colleges and universities protect their athletic legacy and enhance development opportunities.

Our bench of IP, employment, public finance, and private client attorneys brings a wealth of experience relevant to sports clients.

We've led public and private financing for the acquisition, construction, and improvement of sports facilities of all types.

experience

- Handled tax and estate planning logistics for a \$20 million private donation to a regional university multi-purpose sports facility. The donation provided a portion of funding for the facility, and attorneys worked to obtain public funding for the remaining amount.
- Served as bond counsel for a state's flagship university on all financings, leading work on complex financings that accomplished the school's goals regarding construction and expansion. We also helped the university improve its credit structure by helping structure a pooled system of auxiliary facilities such as parking, student housing, dining and recreational facilities. This pooled system boosts the university's creditworthiness by allowing it to obtain a single higher credit rating for all its facilities.
- Served as bond counsel on financing and refinancings for the Edward Jones Dome in St. Louis.
- Acted as bond counsel to St. Louis County in relation to financing for the St. Louis Cardinals ballpark. The refinancing saved St. Louis County about \$9.5 million on bonds issued to provide a portion of the construction funds for the stadium.
- Represented the sellers of the St. Louis Blues during the sale of the team to a private equity group and worked on the refinancing of the team's former arena.
- Represented two major U.S. companies in connection with the naming rights for a major sports and entertainment venue.
- Assisted a facility-owner client with tax issues related to the renaming of a major football stadium.
- Worked on naming-rights and contract issues relative to a multi-purpose sports facility.
- For an established front-office NFL executive, negotiated a successful transfer to another NFL organization.
- For an NBA player, successfully negotiated a multi-year, multi-million dollar player contract with an NBA team.
- For professional basketball players, negotiated player contracts with a number of overseas teams, including teams in Europe and Asia.
- For professional basketball players, negotiated contracts with a number of NBA Developmental League Teams.



- For professional basketball players, negotiated real estate transactions, bank loans and lines of credit, and home purchases.
- For an NBA player, we successfully negotiated a multi-year, multi-million dollar endorsement contract worth \$5 million to \$10 million with a Chinese athletic shoe and apparel company. This deal included considerations related to foreign income tax, currency exchange, and player performance benchmarks and bonuses.
- For professional athletes, established websites and domain names for marketing and promotion.
- Reviewed numerous business ventures and assisted in structuring investment opportunities.
- Developed successful tax strategies for professional athletes and assisted with the creation of a private foundation.
- For a player on the Ladies Professional Golfer Association, negotiated a multi-year sponsorship agreement.
- For an NBA player, developed successful tax strategies and assisted with the creation of a private foundation.
- Represented a Washington, D.C.-based agency with a roster of NBA and professional basketball players and assisted with the company's formation, operating agreement, web-hosting and site design agreements, and other contracts.

professionals

thad

Thad J. Blenke

cherie

Cherie Stephens Bock

victoria a.

Victoria A. Gilbert

sara

Sara E. Kotthoff

robert h.

Robert H. Lang

steven

Steven J. Mandelsberg

kenneth

Kenneth D. Salomon

rhonda

Rhonda C. Thomas

robert

Robert E. Wallace Jr.

halpin

Halpin J. Burke