



Nicola Sollinger

The Development of Sports Law at Marquette

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People often ask me, “How did you get involved with sports law?” I begin with the enduring story of how my dad and I always made time to watch Wisconsin Badger and Green Bay Packer football games during the fall weekends or found ourselves glued to the television for two weeks during the Olympic Games. Sports were our connection. So naturally I began to follow sports, in addition to playing sports. I was never a stellar athlete, but I started finding the business behind the sports industry interesting.

When I was in college, “Jerry Maguire” was a blockbuster hit, and the appeal of working in the sports industry was heightened with the phrase, “Show Me the Money.” Despite the glamorization of the agency life, I had no interest in pursuing such a path, but I was unsure of how I could find another career path in sports. I started reaching out and was able to secure an internship at a three-person sports agency/law firm during my last year of college. Although none of the agents went to Marquette Law School, all knew about the sports law program there, so I decided to look into what the school offered. At the time (even though it was only ten years ago), only two schools, Marquette and Tulane, had established sports law programs. Other law schools only had a sports law journal, perhaps one or two sports and entertainment law classes, and a small student-run sports society. As I researched both Marquette and Tulane, I decided that Marquette was a better fit for me for the following reasons: the internship programs, numerous alumni working in sports, a combination of professors and sports lawyers teaching the courses, and the variety of such courses. Marquette was the all-inclusive package I was looking for.

Every law school student remembers the trials and tribulations of first year. The numerous cases, the fear of the Socratic Method, the near-nervous breakdowns during exam week, and the constant question of “What did I get myself into?” To balance the stress of first year, I, along with several other first year students, found refuge in the National Sports Law Institute office. Professor Anderson always welcomed us into the office, and even as first-year students, he provided us with opportunities to discuss what sports law is, from volunteering at the annual NSLI conference to writing articles in the *For the Record* newsletter. To this day, I recall writing my first case summary about the Baltimore Ravens and a trademark infringement claim. Access to the NSLI expanded my knowledge of what careers are available in sports law, and how valuable a law degree can be when pursuing the dream sports job. Prior to Marquette, I thought jobs were only available at teams, leagues, agencies, and colleges. However, the sports law program brought in speakers who may not work in the traditional roles we often hear about on ESPN or read in Sports Illustrated.

One of most valuable aspects of the Sports Law program is the internship opportunities. Nothing in the classroom can compare to the real world experience. During my second year, I found myself interning in Miller Brewing Company’s legal department. When most people think Miller, they first think beer, but Miller’s involvement with sports is worldwide and ranges from venue sponsorships to athlete endorsements. My start date at Miller was September 11, 2001. The events that day changed the nature of my internship as I spent the semester reviewing force majeure clauses in every Miller sports-related agreement. That internship exposed me to a variety of agreements that are similar to the agreements I draft and review today. However, it wasn’t until my internship at the United States Olympic Committee that I realized how important the Sports Law program was. When I interviewed with the USOC, I emphasized my sports laws courses, especially the Amateur Sports Law course taught by Professor Matt

Mitten. Looking back, I truly believe that the Sports Law program was a selling point in securing the USOC internship. Based on what I learned in the Amateur Sports Law course, I knew about several important USOC cases and the structure of the USOC. My supervisor stated that it made sense to offer the USOC internship to a student enrolled in a sports law program. My participation in the Sports Law program was beginning to open doors. And whenever there was an opportunity for an internship, Professors Mitten and Anderson were there to provide guidance and helpful recommendations.

When I made my decision to attend Marquette University Law School in the fall of 2000, little did I know that I would end up at one of the biggest sports marketing, event management, and athlete representation firms in the world. The courses, internships, and opportunities led me to the USOC and eventually to Octagon, where I am currently Counsel and work primarily on golf, tennis, basketball, and special events, as well as with Olympic and Action Sports athletes.

When I am asked about how I ended up at Octagon or in the sports law industry, I simply state, “the Sports Law program at Marquette.” It’s a simple answer, because it’s true. The Sports Law program was my foundation. The support from the Marquette faculty and staff and the NSLI are outstanding, and there truly is no other program like the Marquette Sports Law program. I am truly indebted to the Sports Law program, the National Sports Law Institute, and the countless opportunities afforded to me at Marquette.



Brent Moberg

Marquette Sports Law: A Launching Pad for Learning and for Careers

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As a young alumnus, my years as a student at Marquette University Law School were spent at a time when the National Sports Law Institute and the Sports Law program were no longer in their infancy. Accordingly, while I did not experience the early years of the NSLI and Sports Law program, as it grew and searched for its place within the law school, I was instead the beneficiary of the hard work of others that preceded me in shaping the program and was able to take advantage of opportunities for learning as the program continued to evolve.

While I can hardly deny that I have always been a huge sports fan, or that my years as an undergraduate at the University of Notre Dame had sparked early thoughts of investigating opportunities for a career in sports, the Sports Law program is not what brought me to Marquette. In fact, apparently before I had grasped the concept of due diligence, I applied for admission to the Law School without fully researching the opportunities at Marquette. At that time, I had no knowledge that the National Sports Law Institute or Sports Law program even existed. I simply decided that, although I was unsure what I wanted to do after law school, Marquette Law School was the place for me. However, throughout orientation and the first weeks of school as a 1L, when asked why I had come to Marquette and what I planned to do after law school, answering, “I’m not sure yet,” seemed rather thin when compared to, “I’m here for sports law” echoed by so many of my classmates. However, although I had been unsure of my own path, I quickly became involved in the various opportunities available through the Institute.