



Frank DeGuire

## The National Sports Law Institute 20 Years Later

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The creation of the National Sports Law Institute was the vision of Professor Martin J. Greenberg. After 20 twenty years, we are able to see a prospering institution that is an important part of Marquette University Law School. However, the early days were filled with skepticism and uncertainty concerning the future of the National Sports Law Institute.

When Professor Greenberg came to me with the idea of an expanded sports law program and a national institute, I viewed it as a way to project the Law School on a wider horizon and attract highly qualified applicants for admission. Marquette was a good law school, but I thought we should be taking that next step to a higher level.

Convincing the law faculty that a sports law program was a logical step was not easy. The skepticism I mentioned was clearly present. "It's not academic enough," was the most frequent comment. Professor James Ghiardi and Associate Dean Charles Mentkowski deserve special recognition for developing a sound program and rationale for implementation. Professor Ghiardi has described this in detail in a prior article (*For the Record*, Vol. 20, #3).

From an administration point of view, funding for new programs becomes critical. The university budgets were very tight in those days, so finding some external sources of funding was necessary. Professor Greenberg and I embarked on a road trip to visit potential contributors. The professional sports franchises in Wisconsin proved to be generous partners in our venture. I recall that one of our first visits was with Judge Robert Perrins, who was then chairman of the Green Bay Packers. After carefully explaining the proposed program including the ethical aspect, the Judge asked Marquette Alum Bob Harlan to join us for further discussions. They agreed to help us with a contribution of \$50,000 and we were off and running. In later meetings with the Brewers, Bucks, and Admirals we always mentioned at the outset that the Packers were already onboard.

After the Law Faculty approved the concept of a sports law program and a National Sports Law Institute, obtaining University Administration approval was necessary. I presented the proposal to Dr. Frank Lazarus, then Vice President for Academic Affairs. He agreed to study the proposal and after several more meetings finally arrived at the same conclusion, that the NSLI could help differentiate Marquette Law School and attract high quality applicants.

Final approval by the University President was required. Marty Greenberg and I met with Father John P. Raynor, S.J. to seek such approval. Noting the affirmative vote of the Law Faculty and Academic Affairs, Father Raynor was impressed that we were able to obtain funding from sources that normally would not contribute to university appeals. He also proved to be an enthusiastic supporter of the NSLI. Professor Greenberg's prior comments described the grand press conference in Grimmelsman Hall that publically announced that NSLI was alive (*For the Record*, Vol. 20, #4).

And so, twenty years later, the hard work of those associated with the NSLI has demonstrated that confidence in Martin Greenberg's vision was not unfounded.