

SPORTS

Sheppard Mullin's Sports Industry Team is uniquely positioned to address the complex and dynamic needs of our sports industry clientele. Our sports practice offers the expertise necessary to provide full service legal counsel to owners, teams, leagues, governing bodies, facility operators, key rights holders, advertising companies, sponsors and others involved in sports-related transactions or disputes.

Sheppard Mullin attorneys have led the way in handling complex sports-related transactions, including sports marketing agreements with MLB, NFL and NHL teams; sponsorship agreements with top NASCAR racing teams, FIFA, the AVP and various media and communications companies; naming rights agreements; ambush marketing initiatives affiliated with marquee professional and collegiate sporting events; athlete endorsement agreements and franchise acquisitions. We have also led development, financing and land use projects for NFL stadiums and MLB parks.

Our team also works with clients who design, manufacture, distribute and sell sporting gear of every type. Our clients clothe and equip consumers across the spectrum of sporting activity: from the country club sports (golf, tennis) to action sports (BMX, motocross, surfing, skate boarding); from serious team sports (football, hockey, baseball) to seriously individual sports (running, cycling, swimming). Our clients also include retailers that range from small, locally-owned stores to national chains. The sports equipment and apparel market has sales in excess of \$70 billion per year. The growth of the industry continues to outpace the growth rate of the gross domestic product. Rapid industry growth brings about opportunities and challenges. Our team excels at helping clients manage through both.

Today's consumer is always looking for improved performance features in their equipment and apparel. Technological innovation and constant design improvement are essential for success in this industry and must be exploited to realize their full commercial value. Patents, trademarks, service marks, trade names, trade secrets, copyrights and trade dress must be carefully protected as it may be a business's most valuable asset in an increasingly competitive marketplace. In our global economy, protection outside of the U.S. is key to maintaining a brand. The counterfeiting epidemic requires that companies pay close attention to their manufacturing, licensing, purchasing, outsourcing and OEM agreements for the successful protection and commercialization of intellectual property rights. Sheppard Mullin helps individuals, start-up companies and Fortune 500 corporations protect their intellectual property.

Consumers are also going "green" and are increasingly conscious of how manufacturers are addressing the sustainability of the earth's natural resources. In response, many outdoor apparel brands and equipment manufacturers have tapped a rich vein by finding performance-based reasons to use such natural materials as bamboo, coconut and seaweed. Sheppard Mullin's "Green Team" can assist clients in developing internal and external "sustainability" programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Our attorneys immerse themselves in the sports industry enabling us to be not only counselors but also part of the culture of the sports industry. For example, we serve as counsel to the International Surfing Association (ISA), the International Olympic Committee-recognized governing body for the sport of surfing. One of our founding partners was a member of the U.S. Ski Hall of Fame, an honor bestowed by the United States Ski and Snowboard Association. The firm is also a founding sponsor of Action & Sport Innovators, a trade organization representing the action sports and sports equipment industry, and is a member of the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association.

Our team can assist your company in the following areas that affect the Sports Industry:

- Advertising and promotions
- Antitrust
- Corporate finance and secured transactions
- Creditors' rights & bankruptcy
- E-Commerce
- Employee benefits
- Factoring and financing

- Franchise protection
- Import, export and customs matters
- Intellectual property
- Joint ventures and other strategic business relationships, transactions and alliances
- Labor and employment
- Litigation and dispute resolution
- Licensing and distribution
- Merchandising
- Mergers and acquisitions
- Real estate development and leasing
- Stock and equity transactions
- Tax