



Irwin Raji

Partner

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As Sports Industry Group Co-Chair, Irwin P. Raji has extensive experience advising clients on a wide range of sports business issues, on both the professional and the collegiate levels. He has represented owners and acquirers of professional sports teams, leagues, universities, and state governments. His experience includes matters related to MLB, MiLB, MLS, NBA, NHL, NFL, and EPL, along with major colleges and universities. Irwin also is an owner of the Oklahoma City Dodgers (MiLB), and the MLS Los Angeles Football Club (LAFC).

Irwin has handled new stadium development projects, project program and development counseling, financing, construction, license/lease agreements, management agreements, concessions, merchandising, ancillary development, licensing arrangements, promotional and advertising agreements (including naming rights), sports technology counseling/ventures, ticketing arrangements, stadium service agreements, RSN formation, and television, radio and media rights agreements. A consensus builder, Irwin also has experience successfully negotiating complex public-private partnerships.

Recognizing the significance of Supreme Court's May 2018 decision permitting states to legalize sports gambling, Irwin created and leads an interdisciplinary task force comprised of partners across the firm's practices and offices to better serve clients navigating this new legal terrain.

Previously, he served as assistant counsel to the Gore/Lieberman presidential campaign, responsible for compliance with Federal Election Commission regulations, drafting committee contracts and leases, conducting research

Admissions

Bar Admissions

District of Columbia

Florida

New York

Education

Washington University, J.D.

University of Miami, B.B.A.

and providing other legal guidance. Irwin also served as an attorney in the White House Office of Counsel to the President and later as associate counsel in the White House Office of Counsel to the Vice President.

Irwin began his career as an attorney advisor for the Department of Housing & Urban Development, and returned to that Department to serve as special assistant in the office of the general counsel and as acting managing attorney for the FOIA Department.

Experience

Mergers & Acquisitions

- Represented **David Tepper**, founder and president of global hedge fund Appaloosa Management, in his US\$2.275 billion acquisition of the NFL Carolina Panthers, the largest transaction for an NFL team to date.
- Represented **David Tepper** and **Tepper Sports and Entertainment** in their acquisition of Major League Soccer's 30th expansion team for the City of Charlotte, NC.
- Represented **Dignitas**, a Harris Blitzler Sports and Entertainment controlled entity (owner of the New Jersey Devils and the Philadelphia 76ers), in forming esports company Mal Pais Entertainment Inc., a joint venture between HBSE, the Houston Rockets and a number of third-party minority investors. In the transaction, the Rockets contributed to Mal Pais CC eSports, LLC, owner of the "Clutch Gaming" League of Legends franchise, and HBSE contributed Dignitas Esports LLC, an esports company with holdings of six esports franchises.
- Advising **Phoenix Rising Football Club** in connection with its bid for an MLS expansion team for the city and related new stadium construction.
- Advising **Palace Entertainment** in connection with its bid for an MLS expansion team for Detroit.
- Represented **Albert Friedberg** in connection with the acquisition of a minority interest in Orlando City SC.
- Led the team that represented **Guggenheim Baseball Management** (headed by Mark Walter, Earvin "Magic" Johnson, Stan Kasten and Peter Guber, among others) in the acquisition of the Los Angeles Dodgers, the single largest transaction ever for a professional sports franchise to date.
- Represented **Rangers Baseball Express** (the investment group led by Chuck Greenberg and Nolan Ryan) in its acquisition of the Texas Rangers.
- Represented former **Milwaukee Bucks President and Owner Herbert Kohl** in the \$550 million sale of the basketball franchise to New York investment firm executives Marc Lasry and Wesley Edens.
- Represented the **Washington Tennis & Education Foundation** in negotiations for its new management agreement and related sale option of the Citi Open with Washington, D.C.-based venture capitalist and entrepreneur Mark Ein.
- Represented multiple entities seeking to acquire both minority and majority interests in **Major League Soccer (MLS)** franchises.
- Represented client in acquiring an e-sports team.
- Multiple additional representations of individuals seeking minority or majority interests in professional teams in various leagues.

Stadiums and Related Development

- Providing advice and counsel to the City of Portland's local business community in connection with bringing an MLB franchise to the city, including a proposed acquisition and related stadium and several million square feet of ancillary development.
- Representing the **State of Hawaii**'s Aloha Stadium facility with site analysis to facilitate planning possible new stadium and ancillary development.
- Representing **Syracuse University** on sports facility development matters, including stadium finance and project management.
- Representing **Hillsborough County** in its ongoing efforts to build a new ballpark for the Tampa Bay Rays.
- Representing multiple state governments regarding stadium development and financing matters related to stadiums for minor league baseball teams.
- Advised **IMG** regarding an agreement with the Miami Dolphins to relocate the Miami Tennis Open to Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens.
- Represented the **West Villages Improvement District** with respect to the development of a spring training facility for the Atlanta Braves in Sarasota, Florida.
- Represented the **City of Atlanta** and **Fulton County Recreation Authority** regarding an arena operating agreement and non-relocation agreement in connection with the US\$190 million State Farm Arena (formerly Philips Arena) renovation, home to the NBA's Atlanta Hawks.
- Represented **Major League Baseball (MLB)** in its successful efforts to relocate the Montreal Expos, now the Washington Nationals, to Washington, DC; and separately in all matters related to the construction of the new, more than \$600 million ballpark for the team.
- Represented **MLB** in its successful efforts to facilitate the negotiation and approval of a new stadium for the Miami Marlins.
- Appointed by **MLB** Commissioner Bud Selig to serve on a three person committee to determine feasibility of developing a new stadium for the Oakland A's in Northern California.
- Assisted with matters related to development of the **Milwaukee Bucks'** new arena and ancillary development.
- Counseled **New York State** in support of Governor Andrew Cuomo's efforts to keep the Buffalo Bills in Buffalo, including the assessment of a new building and successfully negotiating a lease extension and non-relocation agreement in 2013.
- Represented the **Orlando City Soccer Club** with respect to stadium agreements for original site.
- Served as member of the **Sacramento First Task Force**, which assisted the City with evaluating options for the new Sacramento Kings arena.
- Represented **University of Miami** on its basketball arena naming rights deal with Watsco.
- Represented **EB-5** provider related to possible financing for new soccer-specific stadium for DC United.

Media

- Represented **Combate Americas** in connection with a multiyear media rights deal with DAZN, the live-streaming service of Perform Group, in which DAZN will be the exclusive provider of Combate Americas' English language broadcasts in the United States and Canada.
- Represented **LaLiga**, the Spanish soccer league, in its joint venture with Relevent Sports to commercialize its media, sponsorship, and licensing rights in North America.
- Assisting the **Kansas City Royals** with the negotiation of a media rights deal with Fox.
- Representing **Combate Americas**, the first US Hispanic Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) sports franchise, in multiple domestic and international media deals.
- Represented **Guggenheim Baseball Management** (the ownership group for the Los Angeles Dodgers) in the formation of American Media Productions, LLC (AMP) which launched SportsNet LA and the related media agreement between the Dodgers and AMP to air Dodger games.
- Represented **University of Oregon** for its \$57 million multimedia rights deal with IMG College.
- Represented **Syracuse University** in negotiation with IMG College for its multi-media license agreement.
- Represented **Combate Americas** in its agreement with the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) to air events on UFC Fight Pass, UFC's over-the-top (OTT) digital streaming service.

Professional Activities

Speaker

- Speaker, Virtual Panel, "Controlling Acquisitions, Minority Interest Investments, and Divestitures of Professional Sports Teams and Venues," Sports Lawyers Association (July 1, 2020)
- Moderator, "Stadium and Event Financing," Sports Lawyers Association (May 16-18, 2019)
- Speaker, "The Role of Lawyers in Professional Sports Franchise Acquisitions," Harvard Law School (October 11, 2018)
- Panelist, "Innovations in Stadium Development," Miami University of Law Global Entertainment & Sport Conference (April 5, 2018)
- Panelist, "Arenas/Expansions," Sports Law Symposium, Harvard Law School (February 26, 2018)
- Professor "Purchase and Sale of a Minor League Baseball Team," Miami Law School (February 23, 2018)
- Panelist, "New Opportunities in Public Financing – Best Thinking About How and Where Stadium Meets Public Infrastructure Financing," RCLCO & Populous Workshop (February 12, 2018)
- Speaker, "Team Valuation," Lagardère Esports Rising, *Sports Business Journal*, Marina del Rey (November 9, 2017)
- Speaker, "Collegiate Athletics," Sports Business Summit, The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania (November 3, 2017)
- Panelist, "Legal Aspects of Major Sports Venue Management," Sports Lawyers Association Conference (May 19, 2017)

- Speaker and Panelist at numerous universities, including UCLA, University of Miami, Marquette University, University of Pennsylvania, University of Maryland, Notre Dame, Cal-Berkeley, Duke University, and St. John's University, among others
- Corporate Ticket Impact Conference (CTIC)

Author

- "Super Bowl LIII: All Bets Are On," *CFO.com* (January 29, 2019)
- "Murphy v. NCAA: How Legalized Sports Betting Could Affect Athletes' Publicity Rights," *The Licensing Journal* (January 15, 2019)
- "Legalized sports gambling: Anti-money laundering compliance," *Westlaw Journal Bank & Lender Liability*, co-authored with Nicole Argentieri, Steve Olson, Eric Sibbitt, Jeremy Maltby, Laurel Loomis Rimon, and Marjorie B. Truwit (October 29, 2018)
- "Public Development for Professional Sports Stadiums," *Oxford Handbooks Online*, co-authored with Alex Chester (September 19, 2017)
- "Legalized Sports Gambling: Revenue Opportunities Following Murphy," O'Melveny & Myers LLP Client Alert, co-authored with Jared Bartie, Alex Chester, and Marjorie B. Truwit (August 13, 2018)
- "Sports Gambling: Federalism and Potential Federal Legislation," O'Melveny & Myers LLP Client Alert, co-authored with Marjorie B. Truwit (June 25, 2018)
- "Supreme Court Overturns Third Circuit, Holding Federal Prohibition on Legalization of Sports Gambling is Unconstitutional," O'Melveny & Myers LLP Client Alert, co-authored with Charles Baker and Jared Bartie (May 15, 2018)
- "LA Can Learn Lesson From Rams PSL Ruling," *SportsBusiness Journal*, co-authored with Alex Chester (January 9, 2017)
- "Understanding Objectives Can Reveal True Value Of College Rights," *SportsBusiness Journal*, (October 27, 2014)
- "How Responsibility For Ancillary Development Has Shifted," *SportsBusiness Journal*, (September 23, 2013)
- "How ADA Compliance Affects a Venue's Capital Improvement Plan," *SportsBusiness Journal*, co-authored with Erick Harris (May 21, 2012)
- "How A Stadium, Surrounding Area Can Boost A Team's Revenue," *SportsBusiness Journal*, co-authored with Erick Harris (June 6, 2011)
- Multiple articles on topics such as facility development, ADA, ancillary development and stadiums, the business of college athletics, and media

Member

- National Board of Directors for the Development Corporation for Israel
- Board of Advisors for the University of Miami School of Law's Graduate Program in Entertainment, Arts and Sports Law
- Former Board of Directors of the Washington DC Jewish Community Center and the Greater Washington Jewish Federation (2013 and 2014)
- Former member of the Jewish Federation of North America's National Young Leadership Cabinet and the Israel Bonds New Leadership Board

- Former member of the National Alumni Association Board of the University of Miami, and member of Iron Arrow
- Former member of the Board of Directors of Amigos for Kids®, a Florida nonprofit

Honors & Awards

- Recognized as one of *The American Lawyer's* “Dealmakers of the Year” (2019)
- Selected as a Sports MVP by *Law360* (2018)
- Recognized as a “Dealmaker” in *Variety's* Dealmakers Elite: New York (2017-2018)
- Recognized nationally for sports law in the 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 editions of *Chambers USA: America's Leading Lawyers for Business*
- Selected as part of *Sports Business Journal's* “Power Players: Sports Lawyers & Outside Counsel” 2016 list
- Recognized by *The Legal 500 US* for work in sports law (2010, 2014-2020) and for work in media and entertainment law (2018)
- Recognized by *Who's Who Legal: Sports and Entertainment* in 2015 and 2018-2019
- Named to the 2011 *Sports Business Journal/Daily* 40 Under 40 list
- Selected for inclusion in the 2013 Washington, DC *Super Lawyers®* list for work in entertainment & sports
- Recognized by the *South Florida Daily Business Review* as the 2012 Top Dealmaker of the Year in the Corporate Domestic category
- Recognized by the *Washingtonian's* list of Washington's Top Lawyers in 2011 and 2013
- Named a 2009 Young Guns Top Washington Lawyer by the *Washington Business Journal*
- Named the 2008 Young Alumnus of the Year by the Washington University School of Law
- Highlighted by *Washington Lawyer* magazine for his work on the Washington Nationals deal in the cover story of its November issue in 2007
- Recipient of the 2004 American Marshall Memorial Fellowship
- Named a 2003 finalist by the *South Florida Business Journal* as an “Up and Comer” in South Florida's legal community
- Selected as a 2001 recipient of the “Spotlight of Achievers” award from the Latin Auxiliary of the Jewish Home of Miami