



CAREER SERVICES

Job Search 411: Sports Law

*Becoming a sports lawyer takes as much passion, preparation, and hard work as being an athlete. Sports law offers a dynamic and eclectic legal practice, but because it is a niche practice area and sports professionals often keep tight circles, it can often be challenging to break into the profession. Thus, your job search strategy needs to be well planned and *must* include a heavy emphasis on networking, a passion for sports, and some luck. With that in mind, begin building relationships early; not only with sports law lawyers, but also with the sports industry in general. The following are strategic steps to prepare for a career in sports law. As you explore your options, remember that Career Services is here to assist you.*

Your Job Search Strategy: Where to Start?

Step 1: Take Relevant Coursework at Thomas Jefferson School of Law with the Center for Sports Law & Policy (CSLP):

You may have an interest in sports and athletics, but having an understanding of *sports law* is key for a successful career as a sports lawyer. Sports law is a fast growing, billion dollar industry and TJS� offers a stellar academic fellowship and certificate program for interested students. We recommend researching Thomas Jefferson's [Sports Law Fellows](#) and Sports Certificate Program to evaluate if it is the right program for you. The benefits are many, including priority registration for sports law courses and you demonstrate to future employers your commitment to the field. Enroll in as many of the following law school courses to build your academic foundational knowledge of sports law: *Sports Law, Amateur Sports Law, Professional Sports Law, International Sports Law, Infractions and Compliance, Collective Bargaining in Professional Sports, Race and Gender in Sports, Labor Law, Employment Law, Entertainment Law Transactions, Business Law, Negotiations and Mediations, Contract Drafting, Intellectual Property, Copyright Law, Trademarks, Right to Publicity, and Celebrity Advertising.* TIP: *Plan ahead. Review the availability of classes (they may not be offered each semester). Meet with your academic advisor to ensure you make room in your schedule for these helpful law courses.*

Step 2: Join Clubs and Organizations On-Campus and Off-Campus:

Joining the *Sports Law Society* here at TJS� and other off-campus community sports law organizations is both productive and enriching. You will meet other students with similar interests as well as TJS� alumni and other lawyers who are currently working in the field. You will gain exposure to the latest legal issues and happenings. You will meet a network of potential mentors who can share their wisdom and possible sports law job openings with you. Volunteering at club meetings, receptions, conferences, and events is also a way to take a break from your studies, enjoy a little social time, and build your professional relationships. Run for and succeed in leadership positions in such organizations. After all, "it's all about who you know." TIP: San Diego is a great city to be in the sports law industry. See **Appendix A** for helpful links to sports law organizations to join.

Memberships are often free or discounted for students. Many organizations keep a job listing for its members as well as an upcoming events calendar where you can find events to network.

Step 3: Get to Know Your Sports Law Faculty:

Identify and make an appointment to speak with our professors who teach sports law and related areas such as entertainment law and business law. They have practiced in the field and are very knowledgeable about the industry. Because sports law encompasses a variety of different industries and legal issues, your professors can help you narrow down your interest and guide you in the right direction. You have resident experts in sports law right here on campus. Take the time to get to know them. TIP: *For a list of professors, see **Appendix A**. If you have a genuine passion and demonstrated interest for sports law, let your professor know. Professors are happy to mentor such students and it is not unheard of for professors to recommend their mentees for job opportunities.*

Step 4: Gain Practical, Hands-On Experience in Sports Law:

Did you know Thomas Jefferson offers opportunities for experiential learning? Students can gain real-world legal experience (sometimes for academic credit for 2Ls and 3Ls) to complement their academic knowledge in sports law.

Jobs and Internships: Apply for jobs and internships on Symplicity and other sport law related job listings. For college sports, ask Career Services for a list of college internship coordinators. (See also the employment sites for the NCAA and the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NCACDA) in **Appendix A**).

Externships and Clinics: Get class credit externships through our [Externship Program](#) or register for a [TJSL clinic](#).
Competitions: Join and compete in sports law writing and advocacy competitions (for a list of annual competitions, see **Appendix A**).

Gaining practical sports law experience while in law school demonstrates to future employers your proactive dedication and qualifications for summer and post-graduate work. It will also boost your confidence that you have professional experience that will be of value to employers.

Step 5: Build Relationships (Network!) with Alumni and other Sports and Entertainment Lawyers:

Search for and connect with Thomas Jefferson alumni currently working in sports law. Check the alumni network on [Symplicity](#), contact [Alumni Services](#) for access to the Thomas Jefferson Alumni Directory, or conduct an attorney search on Martindale Hubbell, Lexis, and Westlaw. At sports law organization events, you can meet many other lawyers practicing in the field. The Center for Sports Law and Policy brings to TJSL guest speakers from the sports industry on a regular basis. Attend these events and make it a point to meet these speakers and other attendees after the program. Professional sports leagues often hold their annual meetings and conferences in San Diego, bringing many professionals in the sports industry right to our neighborhood. Introduce yourself as an aspiring sports lawyer and start building a professional relationship. Reach out and arrange informational interviews to learn about their work and journey to a career in sports law. Before you know it, you will have a network of professionals that you can confidently inquire about job openings and other professional development opportunities. TIP: *Get organized and keep a spreadsheet of each person in your network. It will make it easier for follow up in the future. Make a goal to contact several people a week for informational interviews and/or to attend networking events. Set calendar reminders for yourself to stay on track.*

Step 6: Make an Appointment with Career Services:

We will help you create a personalized job search strategy and draft a sports law resume and cover letter. We also assist your professional development by perfecting your elevator pitch and networking skills and by preparing you for interviews. We are always available for other legal career exploration and support as needed. Imagine how much easier it will be to apply for jobs when you have your resume and cover letter ready and you can market and present yourself as an aspiring sports lawyer. TIP: Sign up for a counseling appointment on [Symplicity](#).

Step 7: Be a Strategic Job Searcher:

If you followed Steps 1-6, then hopefully this final step will be much easier for you. You are more likely to discover unique job opportunities through your knowledge, experience, and network of sports law professionals. We recommend, however, that you also conduct your own independent job search.

1. **Online job search:** View job postings on [Symplicity](#) and other sports law resources. Search online for law firms, solo practitioners, companies, agencies, government offices, and universities as sports lawyers work in many different settings. Conduct a separate search for jobs in the specific industry you are interested in (for example, professional sports, college athletics, etc.). Many offer internship and employment opportunities on their career websites. If jobs are not listed, contact their human resources department and ask about possible openings. You would be surprised at how many companies simply do not list their positions online.
2. **Leverage your personal background:** Your interest in sports law likely comes from personal or professional experience in the industry. Use it to your advantage as you network, connect with former colleagues, and draft cover letters. For example, alumnus [Marlon Tucker](#) leveraged his experience as a college football player and connections to coaches into a career as an agent representing NFL football players. Alumna Brenda Foster leveraged her pre-law school experience in scouting and player development for the San Diego Padres into a position working for a prominent attorney who represents NFL players. She is now an attorney at BKK Sports.
3. **Be prepared to move geographically:** Although San Diego is a great city for a sports law attorney, the practice area lends itself to geographic diversity. There are sports teams and college sports programs *everywhere*, so keep an open mind about possibly having to move for that dream job.
4. **Be patient with yourself and diligent with your search:** Searching for a summer job or post-graduation position is a lot of work and requires patience as you continue to find opportunities. Don't lose your momentum in reaching out to new contacts and touching base with those whom you've already created a relationship. Keep looking, cast a wider net for different, yet relevant, jobs and stay diligent in your search. If you feel you've hit a wall or need new ideas, Career Services is always available to meet with you to brainstorm new strategies.
5. **Search also for "stepping stone" opportunities:** Remember that sports law is a niche legal area, but it encompasses a wide variety of legal practices. Accordingly, keep an eye out for positions that may not necessarily be in sports law, but will still teach you the relevant skills and give you experience for a successful sports law career. Jobs practicing law in the following areas make excellent stepping stones for a future sports law career:
 - Entertainment Law
 - Contract Law and Contract Drafting
 - Administrative Law
 - Business Law
 - Mediation and Negotiations
 - Tort Law such as Defamation, Medical Malpractice, and Right of Privacy
 - Intellectual Property including such as Trademark, Copyright, and Right of Publicity
 - Employment Law and Labor Law

Keep in mind that sports lawyers have a varied background and many did not land jobs with sports teams or with individual athlete clients right after law school graduation. Instead, they gained legal experience and knowledge representing clients in other relevant industries that transferred into sports-related legal work. Very few lawyers spend the bulk of their practice in sports law cases. Most perform professional services for one or more clients who are part of the sports industry. It may take time, but as long as you are gaining relevant experience at your job, you are still making it possible to get your dream job in sports law.

Sports Law Industries

Sports law developed into a separate practice only a few decades ago in response to the rise of player-agents and media scrutiny of sports law topics. Now, sports law encompasses the following industries, listed with samples of their legal issues:

PROFESSIONAL SPORTS: labor law, contract law, antitrust law, tax law and finance, private association, issues arising from talent agreements, player-agent relationships, criminal law, intellectual property law, and torts.

AMATEUR SPORTS: NCAA regulation and compliance, ethical conduct of athletes, ethical conduct of recruiters, eligibility, gender equity (Title IX), defamation, privacy rights, arbitration, and other administrative law issues.

MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT: sports advertising, television and radio broadcasting, censorship, confidentiality, copyright, defamation, freedom of information, telecommunications, sports video game development and production, publishing and print media issues, sponsorships, spokes modeling, author agreements and general intellectual property.

POTENTIAL CLIENTS: individual athletes, sports teams, sports clubs and organizations, coaches, referees and officials, leagues, sports governing bodies, athletics administrators, educational institutions, sports facility owners and operators, sports broadcasters, sports equipment manufacturers, sports medical care providers, sponsors of athletic events or athletes.

APPENDIX A: Names and links to sports law-related organizations and opportunities.

At Thomas Jefferson:

Center for Sports Law and Policy: <http://www.tjssl.edu/sports-law-policy>

Sports Law Fellows Program: <http://www.tjssl.edu/academics/jd-programs/law-fellowships/sports-law-and-policy-fellows-program>

Thomas Jefferson School of Law's Sports Law Society: Email at sportslaw@tjssl.edu

Externship Program: <http://www.tjssl.edu/clinics/externships>

Art & Entertainment Law Project Law Clinic: <http://www.tjssl.edu/clinics/aelp>

Trademark Clinic: <http://www.tjssl.edu/clinics/trademark-clinic>

Center for Intellectual Property Law: <http://www.tjssl.edu/law-intellectual-property>

IP Fellows Program: <http://www.tjssl.edu/academics/jd-programs/law-fellowships/ip-fellows-program>

Thomas Jefferson Sports & Entertainment Law-Related Professors and Advisors:

[Randy Grossman](#) '94 – Introduction to Sports Law and Professional Sports Law

[Jack Greene](#) – Amateur Sports Law and International Sports Law

[James McCurdy](#) – Sports Law and related topics

[Kevin Greene](#) – Contracts, Entertainment Law, Music Law

[Eric Lane](#) – Introduction to IP Practice, Trademark Clinic, IP Practicum

[Stephen Novak](#) – Entertainment Law Transactions, The Law of TV and Motion Picture Production, Contracts Drafting

[Sandra Rierson](#) – Advanced Trademark, Intellectual Property, Trademark & Unfair Competition Law
[Steven Semeraro](#) – Intellectual Property & Competition Law
[Jeff Slattery](#) – Arts and Cultural Property Law, Copyright, Arts & Entertainment Law Project
[Julie Cromer Young](#) – Copyright, Intellectual Property, IP and Competition Seminar, IP Fellows Program

Sports Law Competitions:

National Sports Law Negotiation Competition – <http://www.tjssl.edu/conferences/nslnc>
National Baseball Arbitration Competition – <http://www.law.tulane.edu/tlsOrgs/sportslaw/index.aspx?id=11368>
Tulane Mardi Gras Sports Law Invitational – <http://www.law.tulane.edu/tlsOrgs/mootcourt/index.aspx?id=5054>
Fordham National Basketball Negotiation Competition – <http://law.fordham.edu/student-groups/28175.htm>
Marquette University Law School's National Sports Law Student Writing Competition – <https://law.marquette.edu/national-sports-law-institute/national-sports-law-student-writing-competition-0>

In San Diego:

San Diego County Bar Association's Entertainment & Sports Law Section: <https://www.sdcba.org/index.cfm?pg=SENERCommAbout>
San Diego Entertainment and Sports Lawyers: <http://sdesl.org/>
San Diego Sport Innovators: <http://sdsportinnovators.org/>

Beyond San Diego:

Los Angeles County Bar Association's Entertainment Law and IP Section: <http://www.lacba.org/showpage.cfm?pageid=181>
California Bar Association's IP Section (with Sports Law interest group): <http://ipsection.calbar.ca.gov/IntellectualPropertyLaw/About.aspx>
New York State Bar Association's Entertainment Arts and Sports Law Section: <https://www.nysba.org/EASLHomePage/>
The National Sports and Entertainment Law Society: <http://nationalsels.org/home/>
Black Entertainment and Sports Lawyers Association: <http://www.besla.org/>
The American Bar Association's Forum/Committee for Entertainment and Sports Industries: http://www.americanbar.org/groups/entertainment_sports.html
http://www.americanbar.org/groups/young_lawyers/committees/entertainment_sports.html
Sports Lawyers Association: <http://www.sportslaw.org/>
List of Sports and Entertainment Law Conferences: <http://www.jathomaslaw.com/fall-2014-sports-entertainment-law-conferences/>
International Trademark Association: <http://www.inta.org/Pages/Home.aspx>
International Media Lawyers Association: <http://www.internationalmedialawyers.org/cgi-bin/countries/bloxom.cgi/USA.html>
NCAA: <http://www.ncaa.org/about/employment>
NACDA: <http://www.nacda.com/nacdajobs/nacda-nacdajobs-center.html>