



News Release

September 25, 2013

Contact: Denice Menard dmenard@tjssl.edu

(619) 961-4312

Annual Sports Law Conference & Negotiation Competition Draws Sports Law Attorneys and 36 Teams to Thomas Jefferson School of Law Team From Chapman's School of Law Takes 1st Place

San Diego, CA - - Sports law attorneys, one of the most respected collegiate athletic directors in the nation and law students from 26 schools arrived at Thomas Jefferson School of Law last Friday, September 20, to kick off a three-day weekend focused on hot topics in the world of sports.

Following the 2013 Sports Law Conference on Friday, 36 two-member student teams demonstrated their skills in the art of representing sports clients on Saturday and Sunday during the 3rd Annual National Sports Law Negotiation Competition. Thirty local, national and international attorneys volunteered to serve as judges to score the competition, which covered issues involving an NHL television deal, concussions from playing sports and a Title IX dispute.

The Chapman University School of Law team of Andrew Mase and Clay O'Neal took first place with an impressive performance after finishing in 4th place at last year's competition. The UC Hastings College of Law team finished in second place, the Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law took third and Fordham University School of Law came in fourth.

"Thomas Jefferson put on a wonderful competition," said Joshua Igeleke Jr., a third year law student from UNLV – William S. Boyd School of Law, who competed on one of the negotiation teams.

"The NSLNC is by far the best sports law competition," said Coach Thomas Greene of St. John's University School of Law. "It was really well-organized, and the diverse topics were all very strong."

Concussions and other sports-related injuries, as well as women's intercollegiate football, were the issues addressed by panelists at Friday's conference, organized by the Center for Sports Law & Policy at Thomas Jefferson School of Law under the direction of TJS� Professor Rodney Smith. TJS� Trustee and San Diego attorney Randy Grossman presented David Williams II, the Vice Chancellor for University Affairs & Athletics at Vanderbilt University, with the Center's "Rudolph C. Hasl Leader in Sports Award."

"I've always been fascinated by making things change," said Williams. "I believe that sports bring people together and change lives." Williams is a strong advocate for the student athlete and Director of Athletics at Vanderbilt. He also serves on the NCAA's Committee on Infractions and has worked with the SEC in negotiating its latest media agreement with ESPN.

The first panel of the conference addressed the Title IX implications of creating intercollegiate women's football, the focus of the Center's first white paper. The panel concentrated on the ongoing issue of universities struggling to comply with Title IX and to provide women with opportunities to participate in intercollegiate athletics. The NCAA has suggested adding rowing, bowling and equestrian opportunities.

“Women’s football is the fastest growing sport in Florida,” noted Professor Smith. “New York City and Alaska have seen successful as well. Women like to watch and play football. They’ve left some of the other sports because they gravitate toward football. Per capita, there are more women playing football than any other sport. USA Football and the NFL have joined together to create flag football programs for girls.”

“There is definitely interest in women’s flag football,” said moderator Claire Zovko, a sports business consultant and attorney. “It’s blowing up in Florida. Students surveyed wanted to play. The greater interest and resources are in flag football, not tackle.”

The second panel, moderated by local sports law attorney Jeremy Evans, addressed recent updates in head and related sports injuries. Panelists included TJSJ Professor Joy Delman and sports law attorneys Ben Coughlan, Rey Hernandez, James Paterson and Ron Mix, a Pro Football Hall of Famer who played for the San Diego Chargers.

“The current trend in all personal injury litigation is concussion litigation,” said Professor Delman, who has done extensive research in this area. “A recent study found that there are between two and three million sports concussions annually. It is estimated that over 50% of high school athletes have suffered a concussion before entering high school.”

“Different people have different susceptibility to brain injuries, and we don’t know why,” said Coughlan. “Chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) can only be diagnosed in an autopsy. We’re looking for a way to diagnose during life, which will save lives.”

Following the conference on Friday evening, the coaches and student participants in the negotiation competition enjoyed a rare opportunity as they watched the San Diego Padres - Los Angeles Dodgers game from four private suites at Petco Park. That's when sports agent Randy Grossman, who also teaches Sports Law at TJSJ, brought by his client, Major League Baseball Hall of Famer and Padres Executive V-P Dave Winfield, to sign autographs and pose for photos. Padres General Counsel Erik Greupner also made a special appearance to converse with the participants.

Next year's 4th Annual National Sports Law Negotiation Competition and Sports Law Conference at TJSJ will take place the weekend of September 19 – 21.

Photos Included:

IMG_1831: Professor (Left to Right) Rodney Smith, Keynote Speaker David Williams II, Professor Randy Grossman, Professor and Former Dean Rudy Hasl

IMG_1832: (Bottom Row) Final Four Teams, (Top Row Left to Right) Judges Professor Ken Vandeveld, Dean Thomas Guernsey, Professor Rod Smith