

## Sports Group Of The Year: Proskauer

By **Sam Reisman**

*Law360, New York (February 7, 2018, 1:54 PM EST)* -- For its accomplishments steering the \$1.2 billion sale of the Miami Marlins to completion and representing Los Angeles in its successful bid to host the 2028 Olympics, the sports group at Proskauer Rose LLP nabbed a spot as one of Law360's Practice Groups of the Year.

The group's representations have run the gamut from college sports to a range of professional leagues and even the burgeoning world of esports. Some of the most significant matters from the past year include representing the National Hockey League with its successful expansion into Las Vegas, defending the NCAA's Power 5 conferences in multiple major litigations and shepherding the Detroit Pistons through their recent relocation.

Joe Leccese, chairman of the firm and co-head of its sports practice group, said that the group's purview and scope of expertise have evolved in tandem with the sports industry as it continues to grow and expand into new areas.

"The breadth and depth of the transactional work obviously has increased dramatically over the years as sports has found its way into every available media platform, whether that's cable or satellite or internet or mobile devices and the like," he said in a recent phone interview.

Leccese continued: "Then, as often happens, when the business expands commercially, there is a broader array of litigations."

The group's standout achievement from the past year, he said, was the lengthy, tumultuous journey undertaken on behalf of Los Angeles as the city sought to host the Summer Olympic Games for the third time in its history. Leccese described the three-year undertaking, which was run out of Proskauer's New York and Los Angeles offices, as "Herculean."

The effort initially hit a snag in January 2015 when the U.S. Olympic Committee selected Boston as the nation's candidate city to host the 2024 games, but Proskauer continued to serve as adviser to the L.A. bid, anticipating that Beantown might not keep its name in the ring for long.

"We had sensed from the beginning that Boston might have some issues, and we had decided we were



going to keep our committee and its operations intact so that we could flip the switch and get back into action if needed,” recalled Jon Oram, the Proskauer attorney who led the effort.

Indeed, after Boston backed out some six months later, Proskauer attorneys were successful in not only snagging the USOC’s nomination for Los Angeles, but ultimately negotiating the unusual result in September, in which the International Olympic Committee named the host cities for two quadrennial games at once: Paris snagged 2024 and 2028 went to Los Angeles.

Oram, who described the victory as the “highlight of my career,” said the IOC’s decision sprang from a number of factors, such as the fact that Los Angeles already had much of necessary infrastructure in place and the unique circumstance of having two strong bids on the table even as enthusiasm for hosting the Olympics has waned globally.

“I think there was a real concern as to who would bid for the games in 2028 if [the IOC] didn’t do anything to radically change their process,” he said. “Unlike other countries, U.S. Olympic bids do not get public money either to host the games or support the bid process. The funding is generated by sponsorships and private donations.”

The team is currently in the process of launching the organizing committee for the L.A. games, which are set to take place in just over a decade.

“I decided to be a corporate lawyer 17 years ago because I liked deals that started and finished in about three months,” Oram said. “This is certainly the longest project that I ever worked on.”

The other major highlight from the sports team’s year was representing the Miami Marlins in its \$1.2 billion sale to a group led by Florida businessman Bruce Sherman and retired New York Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter. The deal, which was announced in August and closed in October, came some 15 years after Proskauer represented former Marlins owner Jeffrey Loria in his initial purchase of the team.

While the group is a relatively small part of the firm — Leccese estimated the full-time equivalent of 40 attorneys work on sports matters — he said the practice remains “a meaningful part of our brand” and “an important part of our legacy.”

Over the past decade-and-a-half, the firm has cultivated relationships with all five major professional sports leagues in the U.S., representing them in labor issues, such as their collective bargaining, according to Leccese. Looking ahead, he predicts the practice will grow to encompass legal matters arising from the boom in esports and the proliferation of new media platforms broadcasting sporting events.

“We’re very bullish on the sports business and therefore on the legal aspects of servicing the sports business,” he said. “So we’ll continue to grow our bench.”

--Editing by Emily Kokoll.