

## Jonathan L. Israel

### Partner

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Jon Israel is an experienced sports law and labor & employment attorney, advising and litigating for clients on a wide variety of traditional labor and general employment and corporate matters. He is a partner and co-chair of the firm's Sports & Entertainment Group, representing clients in diverse industries, including professional and collegiate sports, esports, entertainment, media, financial services, hedge and private equity funds, manufacturing, and retail.

As a veteran sports lawyer, Jon is a trusted advisor to a variety of stakeholders in the sports industry, including professional leagues and teams, college athletic departments, commercial sponsors, and Olympic-sport national governing bodies, on a broad range of legal matters involving commercial transactions, litigation, and business operations.

As the sports industry continues to evolve, Jon is assisting clients with novel legal issues and emerging areas. He launched and manages the firm's College Sports: NIL Task Force, representing colleges, universities, and collectives relating to the commercialization of student-athletes' names, image, and likeness. Additionally, he advises companies in the area of esports on employment issues related to investment and M&A activity.

Historically, Jon represents sports industry and other corporate clients in wide range of labor and employment matters, including equal employment litigation & counseling, wage and hour litigation & counseling, worker misclassification, restrictive covenants & trade secrets, employment contracts and separation agreements, federal and state agency investigations (e.g., Department of Labor), labor and employment issues in corporate transactions, workforce reductions, ERISA & employee benefits, the negotiation and administration of collective bargaining agreements, the arbitration of labor grievances and disputes, and the litigation of labor-management disputes before courts and the National Labor Relations Board.

Previously, Jon was assistant general counsel at the National Basketball Association where he served as in-house counsel to the NBA and its affiliated entities and teams on labor and employment, litigation, and

general corporate matters.

### **Representative Experience\***

- *Upshaw v. Detroit Pistons Basketball Co.* (E.D. Mich.) (represented NBA team in tort action)
- *Krystal C. v. New York Jets, LLC* (N.J. Super. Ct.) (successfully managed putative wage/hour class action brought by former team cheerleaders)
- *Action Ink v. New York Jets, LLC* (E.D. La.) (obtained summary judgment for NFL team in a trademark infringement action involving the team's use of the phrase "Ultimate Fan"), *aff'd* (5th Cir.)
- *Thompson v. WNBA* (S.D.N.Y.) (obtained dismissal of fraud action by former head coach and general manager of the Houston Comets)
- Major U.S. university and athletic department (represented university in employment discrimination litigation brought by former coach)
- Multiple college sports "collectives" (advising on contractual and operational matters concerning the commercialization of the name, image, and likeness ("NIL") rights of college athletes)
- Professional sports leagues and teams (advising on issues relating to team medical staff operations)
- Professional sports teams and colleges (negotiating executive and coaching contracts)
- Industry-Leading Esports & Video Gaming Company (advise company on proposed investment and commercial transactions with leading music and entertainment company)
- Industry-Leading Multi-Game Esports Team (prepare, negotiate, and analyze professional player, staff, and influencer contracts, including for North American League of Legends Championship Series)
- *In re Palumbo (New York Life Insurance Co.)* (N.Y. DOL Appeal Board) (obtained reversal of agency decision classifying independent agent as employee)
- *Newton-Haskoor v. Coface North America* (D.N.J.) (obtained dismissal of sex discrimination and whistleblower claims against client), *aff'd* (3d Cir.)
- *Coface Collections North America v. Newton* (D. Del.) (obtained preliminary injunction enforcing non-compete and other restrictive covenants against former president and seller of business acquired by client), *aff'd* (3d Cir.)

\* Matters handled prior to joining Foley.

### **Awards and Recognition**

- Recognized, *Chambers USA: America's Leading Lawyers for Business* both in Sports Law and in Esports (2021-2025)
- Recognized, *The Best Lawyers in America*®
  - Litigation – Labor and Employment (2020-2024)
  - Sports Law (2023)
- Recognized, *The Legal 500 United States*

### **Affiliations**

- Member, Sports Lawyers Association

## Sectors

- [Blockchain & Digital Assets](#)
- [Innovative Technology](#)
- [Sports & Entertainment](#)

## Practice Areas

- [Health Care in Sports](#)
- [Labor & Employment](#)
- [Litigation](#)
- [State Attorneys General](#)

## Education

- Columbia Law School (J.D.)
  - Recipient, Harlan Fiske Stone Scholarship
- Harvard University (B.S., cum laude)

## Admissions

- New York
- New Jersey