

# STEPHEN TOWNLEY, Solicitor, FCI Arb

Legal Counsel, International Arbitrator, Neutral, Mediator: *IP, Sport, Entertainment, Intangible Asset Management and Brands*



## Accreditations:

- Solicitor (1978)
- Arbitrator and Mediator, Fellow Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (1999)
- International Neutral, Arbitrator and Mediator JAMS Mediation, Arbitration and ADR Services (JAMS) (2019)
- Arbitrator and Mediator, World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) (2018)
- Arbitrator, Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) (1996)
- Mediator, Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) (2012)
- Industry Expert, Sports Sector, Singapore International Mediation Centre (SIMC) (2015)

## ADR PROFILE – CROSS FUNCTIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERTISE

A highly accomplished and experienced **legal counsel** and **ADR specialist** with over **45 years** of success across law, business, and international dispute resolution. Widely known as an **"entrepreneurial lawyer."** **Founder and senior partner** of Townleys, which was recognised as the first and largest boutique international IP law firm in the sports sector outside the US. It was graded by both Legal 500 and Chambers as the top legal practice in sport for nine consecutive years prior to its merger with a global 100 firm. Co-author of an early legal, business, and tax textbook on **intangible asset management (IAM)**.

For 25 years, **co-founder and chairman** of a management consultancy, Active Rights Management Ltd (ARM), specialising in the rights and technology sector monetising IP and intangible assets through creating and executing the right model to maximise value. Clients of ARM have included **Royal Ascot Racecourse and the BHB, the English Premier League (EPL) through Football Data Co, and the Singapore Sports Hub**, among others. Through subsequently **co-founding** NetResult Ltd solutions were offered to major brand owners such as **F1, FIFA, UEFA, NFL, and Football Data Co** identifying piracy and theft of digital content with unlicensed streaming.

Finding cost effective solutions as a **lawyer, investor and deal maker** to create, evolve and protect IP and intangible assets led to a robust reputation **globally** across **sport, entertainment, content, media, technology, finance, and investment**. This experience provided the backdrop and motivation to explore why and how commercial relationships sometimes sour and end in conflict. Assessing the best methods, tools and resources both inside and outside organisations to prevent escalation and resolve the conflict is then the priority. Resources may already exist within an organisation that can be mobilised effectively with advice and guidance. Not all tools need to be formal, although some will be, such as arbitration. All business relationships are sustained through trust. One of the risks of litigation apart from cost and disruption to business, is that it can permanently damage that trust and make future dealings difficult. Considering ADR alongside risk management strategies in organisations should prove a sound investment in long term sustainability and in doing so impact the bottom line of any business.

Deep experience has therefore been acquired internationally in **arbitration, mediation and ADR** both as **legal counsel and ADR practitioner**. As arbitrator acted as chairman and panellist. Currently based in London but have worked, and in some cases, lived in multiple jurisdictions. This provides valuable cultural insights into differences and sensitivities in managing and resolving conflict. Jurisdictions include Singapore, Hong Kong, China, India, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, USA, and Europe.

## CURRENT AREAS OF PRACTICE THAT INFORM SECTOR EXPERTISE

### IP & IAM, COMMERCIAL RIGHTS CREATION & MONETISATION

Creation, assembly, structuring, protecting, owning and enforcing rights and arrangements for monetisation of intangible assets (IA) through licences, partnerships, JVs, and sale, etc. Sponsorship is an example for context. Recognition of IP and proprietary rights in IA will depend upon jurisdiction and treaties. Ownership may, for example, be recognised by statute as is often the case for copyright, trademarks, patents, design rights, image rights, media rights, data rights, and performing rights. In some jurisdictions, particularly those with a common law origin, "goodwill" can be recognised as a proprietary right through use of IA. Rights can also be created through contract, such as granting exclusive access to a private venue, and granting rights that arise through such exclusive access such as content and image rights.

### BRAND & REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Impact of non-compliance with legal/regulatory for individuals and entities on their respective reputations and how to manage and mitigate potential damage has become important with social media amplifying views and opinions. Sector specific knowledge within IP and IAM in sport and entertainment as applicable to other industries. Sport has many unique relationships because of "fans" which might be categorised as equivalent to enthusiastic customers for consumer brands. Sport's reputation is an IA, probably accounting for 80/90% of aggregate value and it is highly sensitive to brand and reputation management. As an example, ESG and environmental regulation alongside climate change and integrity issues such as match fixing are having an important impact for sport's value. Managing conflict in this area provides valuable lessons for other sectors.

| CORPORATE, INVESTOR, LICENCE, FINANCE & STAKEHOLDER ARRANGEMENTS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Structuring sustainable contractual relationships within and between individuals, commercial partners, investors, and other stakeholders protects value. Sector experience and knowledge of relevant business models including ownership, control, governance, and integrity will help optimise that value. Within such relationships forward planning to create accountability whilst reducing the risk of disputes arising or escalating through appropriate contractual language becomes important. A broad appreciation of where disputes within a sector are likely to arise is needed. For example, as with athletes, participants, investors, shareholders, partners, participant licensees, and joint ventures. A sector specific understanding of risk management, including insurance is important.                                                                                                                               |
| DISPUTE RESOLUTION & LITIGATION RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AS RISK PROFILE CHANGES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Disputes cost time, money, and resources. They are always best avoided or resolved promptly. Best practice is to use technology including AI and expert systems, that are now capable of cost-effective deployment to identify disputes early in their life cycle. Enterprises may need guidance to understand how technology is providing such opportunities. Many state court systems are under pressure to provide access to justice. Social media can amplify newsworthy disputes and enable views to be formed well before a case comes to a hearing. Working with enterprises to understand and implement technology in this area is a growing advisory role that can materially improve the bottom line of an enterprise. ADR offers much greater scope for confidentiality in conflict resolution than courts. There is often greater scope for those familiar with a business sector to understand and resolve issues immediately. |

| EXAMPLES OF CORE COMPETENCIES IN AVOIDANCE AND AREAS OF POSSIBLE LITIGATION RISK                                        |                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ► Identifying Ownership, IP, Copyright, Trademarks, Patents, Design Rights & Addressing Infringements                   | ► Content Creation and Licensing Including Data such as eSport, Gaming & Betting                                                 |
| ► Conflicts Arising from ESG, Including Safe Sport, Environmental Regulation, Sustainability & Impact of Climate Change | ► Use of Technology to Aid Recognition & Management of Disputes, Proprietary Infringement & Cybercrime, Asset Tracing & Recovery |
| ► Sponsorship, Franchising, Media Rights, Image Rights                                                                  | ► Athlete, Participant, Shareholder, Investor & Partnership Disputes                                                             |
| ► Good Governance to Help Avoid Conflict                                                                                | ► Force Majeure, Risk Monitoring & Management                                                                                    |
| ► Reputational Risk & Brand Management                                                                                  | ► Intangible Asset Valuation                                                                                                     |
| ► Ticketing & Venue Operation & Access Control to Create & Sustain Exclusivity in Intangible Assets                     | ► Insurance Claims                                                                                                               |
| ► Disciplinary Proceedings in Connection with Senior Management as Part of Sport Governance                             | ► Event Disruption, Cancellation & Impact on Cross-Border Investment & Supply Chains, for example from Climate Change            |
| ► Brand Exclusivity in Marketing Agreements                                                                             | ► Ambush Marketing & Clean Venues                                                                                                |

| CURRENT POSITIONS (LEGAL)    |                                                     |                                                 |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 2023 – Present               | Special Counsel – ADR, Sport & Entertainment Brands | Stobbs (Intangible Asset Management), UK        |
| 2019 – Present               | International Neutral, Arbitrator & Mediator        | JAMS                                            |
| 2018 – Present               | Arbitrator & Mediator                               | World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) |
| 2015 – Present               | Industry Expert – Sports Sector                     | Singapore International Mediation Centre (SIMC) |
| 2012 – Present               | Mediator                                            | Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS)            |
| 1996 – Present               | Arbitrator                                          | Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS)            |
| CURRENT POSITIONS (BUSINESS) |                                                     |                                                 |
| 2026 – Present               | Board Member                                        | Wildpool, UK                                    |
| 2025 – Present               | Chair of Advisory Board                             | Global Sustainable Sport, UK                    |
| 2025 – Present               | Board Member                                        | My Club Europe, UK                              |
| 2024 – Present               | Board Member                                        | Mountain Gap Limited, UK                        |
| 2020 – Present               | Chairman                                            | CausalSpark Limited, UK                         |
| 2020 – Present               | Partner                                             | Wild By Nature LLP, UK                          |
| 1998 – Present               | Chairman & Co-Founder                               | Active Rights Management Ltd (ARM), UK          |
| 2006 – Present               | Honorary Member                                     | NSPCC Council, UK                               |

## EXAMPLES OF THE TYPES OF MATTERS HANDLED IN ARBITRATION AND MEDIATION EITHER AS COUNSEL OR ARBITRATOR AND OR MEDIATOR

- Led legal teams as Special Counsel in a **US\$1 billion+ cricket media rights arbitration in India**, involving five jurisdictions, ICC and domestic arbitrations in Singapore and India, anti-suit injunction before the Indian Supreme Court, and successfully discharged a previous arbitration award.
- Series of engagements since 2012 including handling **high-profile FIFA Presidential Election Football body disciplinary matters** before sports panels, national courts, and CAS, involving governance, regulatory, fraud and reputational issues across multiple jurisdictions.
- Experience in **project managing complex cross border teams** including lawyers, forensic accountants, expert witnesses, PR specialists, interpreting and tracking social media and crossovers with regulatory and criminal agencies that can become involved in matters connected with civil disputes.
- **Successful mediation** resolving a multi-party cross-border dispute arising from cancellation of AFC football tournaments across Asia due to Covid interruption including consideration of the impact of force majeure and insurance.
- **Successful mediation** resolving a complex financial services dispute between over one hundred investors and a regulated fund manager in the high-tech engineering sector in the UK.
- **Successful mediation** resolving shareholder, investor and partner disputes in the entertainment and media sector, achieving amicable exit arrangements in Japan and the US.
- **Successful mediation** resolving IP and contractual issues between two rival eSports and augmented reality games organisers based in New Zealand and Sweden.
- **Successful mediation** in 2005 for the transfer of the ownership/control rights to the SportAccord Convention to the Olympic and International Federation movement.
- Appointed as **panel member and chair in CAS arbitrations**, including the ad-hoc CAS panel and panel appointments in UAE arbitrations under ICC and Dubai rules.

## EXAMPLES OF PREVIOUS BUSINESS POSITIONS HELD

- **Served on public and private boards**, including Chair of the International Federation of Strength Athletes (IFSA) World's Strongest Man which was originally **Nasdaq-listed**.
- During chairmanship of **Synchro Arts Ltd. (2011–2021)**, the company and/or its founders earned an **Emmy, two Academy Awards (technology category)**, and **two Queen's Awards for Industry (technology and exports)**.
- Co-founded **NetResult Ltd.**, providing global IP infringement policing for rights owners including **F1** and the **NFL**; sold to **Thomson Reuters** in 2013.
- **Member of the Board, World Sport Football Limited (Hong Kong)**, 1996–2009, which was at the time the largest football business in the Middle East and Asia.
- **Co-Founder and Chairman**, Active Rights Management Asia Pte. Ltd, that was part of the winning consortium to deliver a sports programme that would meet all the project objectives and customer needs and one that would operate for 25 years as part of the consortium for the **Singapore Sports Hub**.
- **Chairman of Sports Resources Group**, 2003, which formed and co-founded the SportAccord Convention.
- **Founded LawAccord** in 2003 and was its Chair for 20 years. Responsible for delivering the programme and from 2014 onwards helped by the collaboration with the **Court of Arbitration for Sport** through the Vice President of ICAS.
- **Founder** of the **International Academy of Sportslaw Practitioners & Executives**, an organisation created with the purpose of bringing together lawyers and sports executives who work on international sports matters.
- **Chief Executive Officer** (1987-1989), News & Production Services owned by the Saudi Ministry of Information.

## EXAMPLES OF PREVIOUS LEGAL POSITIONS HELD

|             |                                    |                                                                                               |
|-------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2012 – 2021 | Foreign Law Consultant (Sport Law) | Withers KhattarWong, Singapore                                                                |
| 2009 - 2011 | Foreign Law Consultant (Sport Law) | Rajah & Tann, Singapore                                                                       |
| 2003 – 2012 | Board Member, Advisory Board       | Melbourne Law Master's Sports Law Programme, Australia                                        |
| 2003        | Chairman                           | Sports Resources Group (which co-founded the establishment of the SportAccord Convention), UK |

|                    |                                                |                                                                                          |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>2001 – 2003</b> | <b>Head of International</b>                   | Hammonds Suddards Edge which merged with Squire Patton Boggs, UK                         |
| <b>1996 – 2008</b> | <b>Board Member</b>                            | Sports Lawyers Association, U.S.                                                         |
| <b>1995 - 2001</b> | <b>Honorary Legal Adviser</b>                  | General Association of International Sports Federations, Europe                          |
| <b>1993 – 1997</b> | <b>General Counsel</b>                         | International Tennis Federation, UK                                                      |
| <b>1989 – 1993</b> | <b>Chair</b>                                   | Sports and Gaming Committee, International Bar Association, UK                           |
| <b>1984 – 2001</b> | <b>Founder &amp; Senior Partner</b>            | Townleys, UK                                                                             |
| <b>1979 – 1983</b> | <b>General Counsel</b>                         | SMPI, West Nally, UK the innovator within sport of Intangible Asset Management (IAM), UK |
| <b>1978 -1979</b>  | <b>Inhouse Counsel &amp; Company Secretary</b> | Hawker Siddeley Diesels Ltd, UK                                                          |
| <b>1975 – 1979</b> | <b>Trainee Solicitor</b>                       | City of London Marine Insurance, UK                                                      |

## OTHER CAREER NOTES

- Finalist, Lifetime Achievement Award – The Legal 500 ESG UK Awards, 2025.
- Pro Bono advisory and philanthropic work for environmental charities such as those connected with the protection and restoration of the River Wye.
- Honorary Member of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children’s Council in recognition of support for the NSPCC’s work for children.
- Supporting the social enterprise Câr-y-Môr to develop jobs for Wales coastal communities through evolving skills in farming seaweed and aquaculture.
- Advisor to the ARK Foundation, which pioneered environmental consumer products in the UK.

## A SELECTION OF PUBLICATIONS & RECENT CONFERENCES

|             |                                            |                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>2026</b> | <b>Interview</b>                           | California International Arbitration Week: Interview with the Daily Journal <a href="#">DJ x Stephen Townley</a>                                                      |
| <b>2026</b> | <b>Moderator</b>                           | California International Arbitration Week: When the World Shifts: Navigating Geopolitical Risk, Energy Transition and Climate Disputes in Arbitration.                |
| <b>2026</b> | <b>Article</b>                             | Four-part article published by LawinSport: Sports Intangible Assets: How Sport Marketing Became Big Business.                                                         |
| <b>2026</b> | <b>Moderator</b>                           | Stobbs and LawinSport Round Table: Protecting Sports Brands from Piracy Aided by the Law and New Technology.                                                          |
| <b>2025</b> | <b>Moderator</b>                           | London International Disputes Week: Arbitration Carveouts – Leveraging AI to Streamline the Disputes Lifecycle.                                                       |
| <b>2025</b> | <b>Grand Final Judge</b>                   | SLAM Sports Law Arbitration Moot.                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>2025</b> | <b>Legal 500 Sustainable Conversations</b> | Supporting Sustainability in Sport.                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>2024</b> | <b>Moderator</b>                           | American Bar Association Conference: Navigating Ownership and Protection of Image Rights in the Age of AI.                                                            |
| <b>2024</b> | <b>Global Sustainable Sport - Workshop</b> | Why sustainability in sport is a top-down governance issue with huge potential commercial gains alongside downside risks that need to be understood at C suite level. |
| <b>2023</b> | <b>Article</b>                             | JAMS ADR Insights: How do we Protect Intangible Assets? A neutral’s perspective on how ADR may be impacted.                                                           |
| <b>2023</b> | <b>Article</b>                             | My Legal Life: Protecting Sport and Entertainment Brands from Litigation.                                                                                             |
| <b>2023</b> | <b>Article</b>                             | Understanding ESG’s Litigation Risk.                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>1984</b> | <b>Textbook</b>                            | Co-Author of Textbook: Sponsorship Sport Art and Leisure (published by Sweet & Maxwell).                                                                              |

## DEGREES/ INDENTURES

**LL.B., (Hons)** London (1971 - 1974).

### **LONDON INTERCOLLEGIATE LL.M., IN MARITIME AND COMPANY LAW**

University College London and London School of Economics (1975).

### **COMMERCIAL APPRENTICE – ENGINEERING SECTOR**

Associated Biscuits, 1966–1968.

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

**Languages** English (native).

**Cultural Appreciation** Experience in many different countries and judicial systems has created an awareness and appreciation of different approaches and sensitivities to resolving disputes and conflicts which I try and use in my approach and work.

**Interests** Married to Caroline with four children and seven grandchildren.

Partner with some of my children in Wild by Nature LLP which owns a Michelin Guided Gastropub alongside a wedding venue, country retreat and a farm producing high quality meat, including its own charcuterie, and organic vegetables.

Fly fisherman, very keen home cook, and active landscaper gardener.

**References** Available upon request.

## CONTACT DETAILS

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