





# Betting on sports law is a goal

Abreu Advogados, Telles and 14 Sports Law are some of the portuguese firms that, on a daily basis, are committed to offering legal advice specialised in sports law

by irina wakstein

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## The sports law practice area became part of Abreu Advogados in 2006, and today it is considered a reference practice area in Portugal

FERNANDO VEIGA GOMES

Years ago, it would have been impossible to think that there are law firms specialised in sports law. However, nowadays, law firms are increasingly relying on this type of service. Such is the case of the portuguese firms Abreu Advogados, Telles and 14 Sports Law, which offer legal advice specialised in sports law.

“The sports law practice area became part of Abreu Advogados in 2006, and today it is considered a reference practice area in Portugal”, explains to Iberian Lawyer, **Fernando Veiga Gomes**, Partner and Coordinator of the sports law practice in Abreu.

The truth is that the professional profiles of those who manage this practice are usually sports enthusiasts or have years of experience offering advice in this type of case. “In 2017, Bernardo Palmeiro who was at FIFA started to entertain the idea. We had both dedicated ourselves exclusively to sports law and wanted to test the market, to see if there was room for a boutique in Portugal but with a very international outlook. Basically, it was a natural evolution of what our careers had been until then”, said the partner of 14 Sports Law, **Luis Cassiano Neves**.

According to the three firms, the cases they usually receive within this practice are very



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diverse. “They can be basically divided in two different areas: transfer related matters and dispute resolution matters”, begin by developing **João Pinho de Almeida** and **José Miguel Albuquerque** from the sports law area of Telles.

In relation to transfer matters, the experts explain that to promote competitive fairness, transfer rules often derogate normal employment practices or typical employee’s rights, notably by limiting the freedom of players to move and by establishing a system of transfer and agency fees that involves clubs, players, coaches, and agents. They shape sports’ rules over the promotion of youth players and the protection of minors, on one side, and contractual stability between clubs and players / coaches on the other side. Transfer related matters refer to the contracts and clauses that form each transfer, notably: solidarity and training costs or taxes and forward funding costs in transfer agreements between clubs; players’ / coaches’ financials and release clauses in employment agreements; agents’ exclusivity and contractual term in representation agreements.

On the other side, “Dispute resolution matters may arise from multiple sources, but they are mostly related to regulatory, disciplinary, registration or contractual stability / employment-related matters. Disputes normally require an important level of experience and expertise, considering sport has been given a high degree of autonomy for its self-regulation, both nationally and internationally, and sports organisations can nowadays decide which set of rules and principles apply in the field of sports and create domestic and international bodies that address any violation of sports regulations and sports-related disputes”, explain Telles’ specialists.

The partner of 14 Sports Law, Cassiano Neves, agrees by stating: “70% of our clients are international. One third of our work is supporting agents and players, mainly drafting, and revising contracts. Another very significant part of our workload is made up by disputes before FIFA and CAS, in which we represent players, agents and clubs”. Also, he adds: “We also provide support to clubs

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in respect of compliance, licensing, disciplinary. Finally, we work a lot in club acquisitions, providing not only legal support to investors, but also assisting in negotiations, and finding the best deals and solutions for our clients and counterparts. This aspect of our work has gained particular importance lately, as the rhythm at which clubs are being bought and sold has accelerated significantly”.

For its part, Abreu has been specialising in sports law for more than fifteen years. For this

reason, the firm has advised on major landmark cases related to sport. “We have advised on important cases over the years, such as the acquisition of Estoril SAD and Mafra SAD, the transfer of the football player Reinildo to Atlético de Madrid or the advising of the racing driver Miguel Oliveira”, explains Veiga Gomes to Iberian Lawyer.

The truth is that the sporting world is one of those branches that is constantly growing and the law, as such, cannot turn a deaf ear to it. ▣



JOÃO PINHO DE ALMEIDA



JOSÉ MIGUEL ALBUQUERQUE