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## Celebrating 10 Years of Onside Law



In late February 2005 Onside Law opened its doors and began advising clients from the sport, fashion and entertainment industries. Ten years on the firm still specialises in these industries and is proud to be ranked as one of the top sports law firms in the country. However, as our team has grown from the three founders to twelve lawyers the client base has become broader and the scope of services we offer much wider.

Clearly our clients are the foundation of our business and we would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support and your business over the last 10 years.

Whilst there have been many special moments, we asked the five partners to choose one key moment in our development. Here are their thoughts.

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## Jamie

For me a key moment was when Rhadames Killy, Legal Director for the French Tennis Federation (“FFT”) instructed us to defend FFT in litigation brought by adidas and subsequently Nike. This was back in 2006, it was just the three of us and we were operating from a two man serviced office in East Putney.

The claim related to restrictions that the four grand slams and the ITF has imposed on adidas’ ability to use the three stripe design at Grand Slam Tournaments. The ITF, Wimbledon, the US Open and Australian Open were all co defendants and all appointed huge international law firms. As we advised FFT and worked with the other defendants our knowledge and experience of tennis and sports disputes became increasingly central to the collective defence. Eventually we settled on agreed form restrictions which remain in place today and have now been adopted by many other sports.

For us the case led not only to a long and warm relationship with



## Oli

When I look back there are a number of key moments. Securing Sir Nick Faldo as one of our very first clients was an important step for the firm and helped us establish ourselves. We continue to advise Sir Nick 10 years on and working with him has helped us to go on and act for many other golfers and high profile individuals.

Negotiating Rory McIlroy’s record breaking Nike contract during the 2012 Ryder Cup in the US and then going to Augusta to see him use the clubs and wear the ‘swoosh’ at the Masters was particularly memorable. And just last week, advising Eden Hazard on his new Chelsea contract and going to Paris to see him play against PSG in the Champions League will also live long in the memory. We have come such a long way from being sat around a kitchen table in Putney, that sometimes I have to pinch myself.

Looking forward I am excited about the 2018 Ryder Cup in France. It was a privilege to



## Simon

A key moment for me was acting for Saudi Arabian royalty in the form of HRH Prince Abdullah bin Mosaad bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on the acquisition of a multi-million pound stake in Sheffield United football club.

The beauty parade saw us pitched against two of the leading corporate powerhouses from the legal and accountancy world. We expected to be outmuscled by the global reputation and experience of the other bidders, but our knowledge of the football industry, corporate pedigree and willingness to give the Prince a firm commercial view won the day. The project was a fascinating mix of the usual corporate and due diligence issues together with the practical issues of designing a structure for the co owners to run the club going forward.

It was gratifying that the qualities that persuaded the Prince to instruct us broadly mirrored the principles we set out with when we first set up our industry specialist firm in 2005.

FFT but with many of the other tennis governing bodies involved including the ITF and the Tennis Integrity Unit with whom we still work closely.

Whilst I can't claim it as a key moment, attending Premier Models' pre fashion week party last week certainly was memorable.

advise on the bid process for the hosting of such a major sporting event and it will be exciting to see it come to life.

On a related note, I am often asked what I most enjoy about Onside Law. For me, it is an easy answer ... the ability to hand-pick those who you work with and, to a large extent, the clients we work for in industry sectors of great personal and collective interest.



**Chris**

For me, the development of our relationship with the England and Wales Cricket Board ("ECB") has been particularly satisfying. When we won the pitch to provide an in-house function to them, we were a team of 5 lawyers. Over the last 7 years the relationship has blossomed and now virtually all of our 12 lawyers work with the ECB in some way or another, depending on the area of legal expertise needed.

For me personally, spending a day each week at Lord's takes me back to my cricketing roots and has given me the opportunity



**Adam**

Although I now primarily advise clients on commercial matters in the sports technology/media sectors, one of my highlights at Onside Law was acting for UK Athletics ("UKA") in 2013 on a dispute with adidas.

The dispute, which arose following UKA's decision to enter into a new kit supply contract with Nike, was played out in front of the Dutch courts. adidas alleged that, as the incumbent supplier, it had already agreed a deal with UKA and therefore the new arrangements with Nike should be set aside as well as substantial damages paid. Niels



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*"They are an amazing outfit. Commentators were impressed with the team's 'faultless knowledge of the sports sector' and its 'pro-active approach and great solutions'. Clients enthuse about the benefits of working with a specialist sports practice that lives by the mantra of providing excellent client service".*

*"Onside Law's status as a boutique solely focused on the fashion, entertainment and sports sectors sets it apart from a number of its peers. Onside Law has impressed the market... It cements its position in the marketplace with clients recommending the 'clued up'*

to build some very close working relationships with all the staff there, from senior management down.

The most rewarding element is that we have built up a level of trust with the senior team at ECB such that we have been at the centre of most of the biggest issues they have dealt with since 2008. It has been a hugely varied experience advising on everything from major title sponsorships and England central contract negotiations, to match fixing prosecutions and staging/host agreements for ICC World Cups and all other international cricket in England and Wales.

I'm very much looking forward to working with the new senior management team as they put their mark on the game.

de Vos (CEO of UKA) and I duly trooped over to Amsterdam to defend UKA's position.

Proceedings were conducted in Dutch and Niels and I listened attentively to the interpreter via headphones, pointing out salient facts to our local counsel where necessary. We were both somewhat taken aback when the judge then asked each of us to address the court on our view of events and why adidas' claim should fail. Happily we seemed to make a decent fist of it, as adidas' claim was dismissed and UKA was able to proceed with Nike, a relationship which is now going strong.

Working on this case cemented our strong relationship with Niels and UKA and this in turn has led to instructions to advise London 2017, the Organising Committee for the IAAF and IPC World Athletics Championships to be held in London in 2017.

*lawyers for their 'unstuffy and commercial approach'.*

*"It offers clients an extremely sports focused service and commentators were impressed with the team's 'faultless knowledge of the sports sector' and its 'pro-active approach and great solutions"*

## Legal500

*"Onside Law has emerged as a serious player in the market. According to clients its 'superior team' 'has very good knowledge of the sports industry' and 'is refreshingly commercial'. It 'impresses in an area where it has genuine niche expertise'".*

*"Jamie Singer, Oliver Hunt, Simon Thorp and Chris Walsh at Onside Law enjoy an excellent market reputation, advising TV and sports personalities, notably Heston Blumenthal, on sponsorship and endorsements. Other clients include model agencies, Betfair, and the England and Wales Cricket Board. "It 'impresses in an area where it has genuine niche expertise'."*

To view Onside Law's client testimonials please click [here](#)