

Divorce and the Professional Athlete: Managing Assets, Custody, and Public Scrutiny

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Representing an athlete through a divorce requires a unique blend of legal expertise, emotional intelligence, and public relations savvy to guide a high-profile client through this complex and challenging period.

Professional athletes live under constant public scrutiny and media attention, with their personal lives often under a microscope. This heightened visibility can add significant pressure during a divorce. To effectively advocate for their client's interests, legal representatives must understand and navigate this unique environment.

Navigating Asset Division

The legal landscape for divorcing athletes is intricate, with elements that differ from a typical divorce case. Professional athletes often possess substantial and complex asset portfolios, including endorsement deals, contracts, and investments. Accurately valuing these assets and negotiating their division can be challenging.

Recommendation: Work with professionals who specialize in high-net-worth divorces and understand the nuances of athletes' contracts, including potential future earnings.

Determining spousal support or income for child support can be particularly complex, as factors such as the athlete's contract, endorsement deals, current income, future earning potential, age and health must all be considered.

Custody Considerations

When children are involved, their well-being is paramount. Navigating custody arrangements requires sensitivity and an understanding of how the athlete's career demands may impact their parenting.

Recommendation: A creative attorney will collaborate with child psychologists or family counselors to develop a custody schedule that prioritizes the children's emotional needs while accommodating the athlete's career obligations.

Managing Public Scrutiny

The athlete's personal life will likely attract significant media attention, making the management of public perception and privacy a critical aspect of representation. Developing a proactive media strategy is essential for controlling the narrative, and the sooner this is implemented, the better.

Recommendation: This strategy may include preparing public statements, managing press inquiries, and addressing rumors before they escalate. It's vital for the divorce legal team to work with a PR team experienced in handling high-profile cases to

mitigate potential damage to the athlete's public image and their family.

Ensuring the client's privacy during the divorce process is also paramount, which includes managing court documents and legal filings to minimize leaks and public scrutiny. Virtual platforms like Zoom and Teams can also provide a secure way for athletes to meet with their attorneys without the risk of paparazzi intrusion.

Emotional Support

Divorce can take a significant emotional toll, particularly for those in the public eye. Athletes may experience heightened stress due to media scrutiny, public pressure, and potential career impacts. Providing emotional support is as important as legal representation.

Recommendation: Encouraging athletes to seek counseling or therapy can provide a valuable outlet for dealing with the emotional strain; a support network of trusted friends, family, and mental health professionals can be instrumental in this process.

It is essential to help the athlete stay focused on their career and personal well-being during the divorce process, which may involve collaborating with their coaching and management teams to ensure their professional commitments are managed effectively.

Strategic Future Planning

Divorce can have significant and long-lasting implications for an athlete's career and personal life, making strategic planning for the future essential. Assessing how the divorce may impact the athlete's career trajectory, endorsements, and public image is important.

Recommendation: Developing strategies to mitigate potential negative effects is crucial for preserving their professional reputation. Additionally, post-divorce financial planning should address changes in income, expenses, and asset distribution. Collaborating with financial advisors to develop a robust plan for managing their finances is vital for long-term stability.

Conclusion

In summary, representing a professional athlete through a divorce requires a comprehensive approach that integrates legal, emotional, and public relations considerations. By understanding the unique aspects athletes face — such as complex asset portfolios, custody arrangements, and the need for media management — legal representatives can effectively navigate this difficult period.

Ultimately, the goal is to protect the athlete's interests while preserving their personal and professional integrity in this high-stakes process. Implementing these recommendations can enhance the effectiveness of representation and support the athlete through this challenging transition.