

STEPHEN TOWNLEY, FCI Arb

Mr. Townley has managed to combine successful careers in both business and law, earning him the reputation of an “entrepreneurial lawyer.” His extensive experience has been gained from roles in a variety of business organisations. For example, as founder and Senior Partner of what was widely recognised at the time as the first and largest boutique international IP law firm in the sports sector outside the US. He has also for 25 years been Chairman of a management consultancy in the rights and tech sector monetising IP and intangible assets. He has been invited to serve on public and private company boards. More examples of legal and business roles are provided below.

Whilst Mr. Townley admits to a love and passion for the law and justice, he believes that resolving disputes through ADR first requires listening. For mediation, negotiating skills are essential and working within different enterprises provides experience of that every day. It is this unique blend of business acumen and legal expertise that Mr. Townley believes defines his successful ADR approach particularly within the IP and tech sectors whether in arbitration or mediation.

Mr. Townley’s skill of finding creative and robust legal solutions to business problems, including disputes, has also been applied in many different jurisdictions, circumstances, and cultures. His ADR work has ranged from cross-border IP and rights issues to stakeholder, investor, and contractual disputes across Europe, Asia, India, the Middle East, and North America. He has acted as a sole arbitrator, panel member (including ad-hoc), mediator, expert, and external counsel. He has handled complex rights and intangible asset disputes worth many billions of dollars.

Focused practice areas of international and cross border ADR work include:

- Matters involving commercial rights and assets including their creation, ownership, monetisation (through licensing or sale), management, protection and enforcement. This encompasses IP and contracts including copyright, trademarks, patents, design rights, and frequently involve, by way of example, content and related issues concerning media, data, sponsorship, franchising, licensing, brand reputation and damage, brand extension, access control, betting, and image rights.
- Disputes arising within and between enterprises, individuals and other entities connected with their operations and supply chains such as ownership, management, control, valuation, and governance. This would include, by way of example, disputes with funding providers, investors, shareholders, partners, licensees, joint ventures, and owners, including succession issues, risk management, allocation, and underwriting such as insurance.
- Consequences arising from the impact of sustainability and ESG compliance obligations throughout the supply chain which can increase relationship friction with regulators, business partners and others, which is best resolved efficiently through ADR. Mr. Townley has recently been shortlisted for a lifetime achievement award for his work in using sport to help advance awareness of ESG issues such as child protection.

ADR EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

- Completed virtual ADR training conducted by the JAMS Institute, the training arm of JAMS. JAMS Neutral, 2019–present.
- Arbitrator, Court of Arbitration for Sport, 1996–present.

- Mediator, Court of Arbitration for Sport, 2012–present.
- Mediator and Arbitrator, World Intellectual Property Organisation, 2018–present.
- Nominated arbitrator under International Chamber of Commerce rules.
- Technical Expert, Sport; Singapore International Mediation Centre; 2015–present.
- Accredited Mediator, Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, 2009–present.
- Fellow, Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, 1999–present.

REPRESENTATIVE MATTERS

Mr. Townley has been engaged in dispute resolution, often through arbitration and mediation in, for example, Hong Kong, Japan, Dubai, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Mauritius, Singapore, New Zealand, India, the United States, the United Kingdom, and throughout Europe. He lived in Asia for a number of years as well as the UK.

- Long-term engagement in connection with the resolution of a media rights dispute in a US\$1 billion plus cricket agreement in India through arbitration and related court proceedings including challenges to arbitration through an anti-suit injunction that was decided by the Indian Supreme Court. These claims involved activity in five jurisdictions with related arbitrations in Singapore and India under the rules of the International Chamber of Commerce and the Arbitration and Conciliation Act 1996. These involved a range of commercial, regulatory, alleged fraud, and criminal related issues. Mr. Townley successfully led legal teams that discharged a previous arbitration award.
- A series of engagements since 2012 handling high-profile sports disciplinary allegations in connection with the FIFA Presidential Elections and Asian and Caribbean Football bodies. These multijurisdictional matters involved hearings before internal sports disciplinary panels, national courts and the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). These included requirements for complex dispute resolution skills, reputation, and media management, working alongside and managing other professionals such as forensic accountants, investigative specialists, and legal teams in several countries. These included allegations of fraud.
- Conflict resolution including a successful mediation leading to the settlement of a multi-party cross border dispute following cancellation of football tournaments throughout Asia because of Covid in 2020/21.
- Successful mediation to resolve a complex financial services dispute between over 100 investors and a regulated fund manager in the high-tech engineering sector in the UK.
- Successful mediation to resolve shareholder, investor, and partner disputes in the entertainment and media sector to achieve amicable exit arrangements in Japan and the US.
- Successful mediation to resolve IP and contractual issues between two rival organisers of competitions in connection with eSports and augmented reality games based respectively in New Zealand and Sweden.
- A number of appointments as an arbitrator with CAS both as chair of the panel and co-arbitrator.
- Member of the ad-hoc panel of the Commonwealth Games.

- Appointment as a panel member in the UAE arbitrations under ICC and Dubai rules.

HONORS, MEMBERSHIPS, AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Founder of LawAccord co-hosted by CAS as part of the International SportAccord Convention, which was a significant development in the international sports marketplace, 2003-2023.
- Member, Advisory Board, Melbourne Law Master's Sports Law Program, 2003-2012.
- Honorary Member of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's Council in recognition of Mr. Townley's support for the NSPCC's work for children, 2006-present.
- Board Member, Sports Lawyers Association, US 1996–2008.
- Honorary Legal Adviser, General Association of International Sports Federations, 1995–2001.
- Chair, Sports and Gaming Committee, International Bar Association, 1989–1993.
- Advisor and fundraiser for various charities, including the NSPCC and Ark, and increasingly advising on regulatory matters connected with UK rivers and waterways arising from Mr. Townley's interest as a keen fly fisher.

BACKGROUND AND EDUCATION

Mr. Townley became an indentured apprentice in the engineering industry before attending university and completing an LL.B. (Hons) between 1972-1974. Mr. Townley attended University College London in 1975 where he studied shipping law and company law between UC and the LSE and gained an LLM. He completed his articles with the City of London firm Ingledew, Brown, Bennison and Garrett where he trained in carriage of goods by sea and marine insurance. The training largely involved contentious matters and litigation. During his articles, he received a dispensation from the Law Society to spend some of his articles at sea acting as a part of the crew of a container ship transporting cargo between Europe and the US. Mr. Townley then joined a subsidiary of a listed engineering company that where he became In-house Counsel and Company Secretary.

In 1979 he was recruited by a new business with a focus on sport and commercial rights as its first General Counsel based in Europe. The work that Mr. Townley began to undertake was from a legal perspective, groundbreaking. It involved helping develop and apply rights models that could be successfully monetised by global events such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games. These commercial rights were packaged and exclusively licenced within product, or service categories, or territorially, and were licensed to global brand owners such as Coca Cola, Gillette, JVC, Canon, Heineken, and media rights owners such as News Corp and NBC. Outside of sport, Mr. Townley also worked with promoters to help deliver groundbreaking commercial tour programs involving rights and intangible assets with artists like the Rolling Stones and David Bowie.

Early experience gained in these sectors was used by Mr. Townley to develop with his partners and colleagues the law firm Townleys, launched in 1984. This coincided with the co-authoring and publication of what was probably the first legal textbook on how intangible assets were used within commercial sport. His firm was recognised as an early trailblazer in the evolution of the sports industry. In 2001 Townleys merged with Hammonds Suddards Edge which then became part of Squire Patton Boggs.

As Mr. Townley's skills in business as well as law became recognised by clients, this led to a series of appointments to the board within a number of client businesses. In 1998, Mr. Townley established a management consultancy with his wife Caroline and has since founded or ran a number of businesses in the tech sector.

CURRENT POSITIONS

- Chairman and Co-Founder of Active Rights Management Ltd., a consultancy undertaking various strategic and advisory projects including brokering media and sponsorship rights. Examples include, devising and helping implement a global data/betting strategy for UK football, devising a digital rights strategy relying upon data for the so called "Super 12 Racecourses" and then taking this to market, structuring and selling commercial rights that were part of the funding for the development of Royal Ascot Racecourse, and devising the sport development strategy which formed part of the winning bid for the construction of the Singapore Sports Hub, 1998–present.
- Chairman and Founder of Disarm focussed on advisory work backed by technology on methods and training in dispute avoidance, 2020-present.
- Special Counsel, Sport & Entertainment Brands, Stobbs (Intangible Asset Management), working with brand owners to apply tech systems to improve management of intangible assets, this includes work to identify risks of litigation and conflict early in their life cycle within enterprises. Where necessary, ADR can assist in deescalating and resolving quickly, 2023-present.
- Member of Advisory Board of Global Sustainable Sport, 2025.
- Board member, "My Club", 2025.

PREVIOUS POSITIONS

- Chairman, Synchro Arts Ltd., 2011– until sale in 2021 to major Canadian music technology company. During Mr. Townley's period as Chairman of Synchro Arts, the company and or members of its team received an EMMY and an Academy Award in the technology category, and two Queen's Awards for Industry, one for technology and the other for exports, 2011-2021.
- Foreign Law Consultant (on sport law), Withers KhattarWong (Advisor to Singapore branch of Withers LLP), 2012– 2021.
- Co-founder and Board Member, NetResult Limited, from 1999 until sale to Thomson Reuters in 2013. NetResult offered a cost-effective solution for major rights owner and media companies such as F1 and the NFL to police and report global infringements of its content by live streaming, 1999 -2013.
- Foreign Law Consultant (on sport law), Rajah & Tann Singapore, 2009–2011.
- Member of the Board, World Sport Football Limited (Hong Kong), 1996 until sale to Lagardere Group in 2009. World Sport Group at that time was the largest football business in Asia, 1996-2009.
- Chairman, International Federation of Strength Athletes (Nasdaq Listed), 2005–2006.
- Chairman Sports Resources Group which co-founded the establishment of the SportAccord Convention in 2003.

- Head of International, Hammonds Suddards Edge, 2001–2003.
- Founder and Senior Partner, Townleys, 1984–2001.
- General Counsel, International Tennis Federation, 1993–1997.
- General Counsel, SMPI, West Nally, 1979–1983.
- In-House Counsel and Company secretary, Hawker Siddeley Diesels Ltd., 1978–1979.

PUBLICATIONS & EVENTS

- Legal 500 ESG Awards 2025: Shortlisted for a Lifetime Achievement Award.
- Worked with JAMS to deliver a session for the International Bar Association Centenary Conference in the fall of 2004 on legal challenges arising from AI and image rights.
- Supporting Sustainability in Sport, Sustainable Conversations, The Legal 500 Green Guide, [Sustainable Conversations – Stephen Townley on Vimeo](#).
- Global Sustainable Sport Summer Workshop Series, Accelerating sustainability through sport, [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](#).
- How do we protect intangible assets?, published in November 2023 by JAMS [How Do We Protect Intangible Assets \(jamsadr.com\)](#).
- Feature in The Lawyer Magazine (October 2023), page 22: <https://www.lawyer-monthly.com/issues/2023/10/>.
- Understanding ESG's litigation risk published in October 2023 by Global Sustainable Sport [Understanding ESG's litigation risk with sports law expert Stephen Townley – Global Sustainable Sport](#).
- Brands within sport and entertainment have heightened litigation vulnerabilities published by iSportConnect in October 2023 ["Brands within sport and entertainment have heightened litigation vulnerabilities" - iSportConnect](#).
- eSport: everything to play for published in the WIPO magazine http://www.wipo.int/wipo_magazine/en/2018/01/article_0004.html. This article arose following an invitation from the IOC and the Indonesian Intellectual Property Office to speak at an event addressing IP issues within sport.
- The Legal and Practical Prevention of Ambush Marketing in Sports, Psychology & Marketing, 1998 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Co-author of textbook, Sponsorship Sport Art and Leisure, published by Sweet and Maxwell, 1984.