



Evolving Intellectual Property Rights Skills for Athletes

D2.1 – IPR Curriculum for students

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Author(s): Konstantinos Nikolaidis-Konstas (Tero Ltd)

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ABBREVIATIONS

WIPO: World Intellectual Property Organisation

WTO: World Trade Organisation

EPO: European Patent Office

OHIM: Office for Harmonisation in the Internal Market

ICANN: Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

EU: European Union

IP: Intellectual Property

IPR: Intellectual Property Right

GI: Geographical Indication



1 BACKGROUND. ABOUT IPR-A PROJECT

For the majority of athletes, including many successful ones, much in their sport, the alternative ways to sustain themselves financially are a reality. The IPR-A project addresses the objective of “encouraging Dual Careers of Athletes” by formulating and carrying out a training program for athletes during and after the end of their involvement in sports, focused on their training on a specific field of entrepreneurship skills, the Intellectual Property Rights Skills. Our projects concept approach is spread in three phases which relate to the Work Packages structure and address specific objectives. Our project will work on three levels: supporting the community (by developing educational programs and IPR entrepreneurial based skills), affecting the social aspect by involving athletes in the process and organizing seminars for immediate application of knowledge through specific educational method and affecting at personal level by increasing the beliefs about IPR and build skills so as to equip athletes for successful and active action with entrepreneurship. The first phase of the project will incorporate activities related to design and define the learning outcomes of our projects program. During this phase partners will focus their actions to development of trainer’s manual and to make the educational course available online. On the second phase co-creation studio will be organized, where the modules will be co-designed with the participants effort, and together with the other activities of this phase, the training program will be delivered to the participants in the form of educational seminars through specific educational method. This will equip them with confidence and a deeper understanding of the IPR skills being acquired to encourage them to tackle entrepreneurship more effectively. The third phase is horizontal and will run from day one and all the way through to the end. It will concentrate on the promotion of IPR skills to retired athletes.



2 INTRODUCTION – Curriculum for students

The IPR-A Curriculum for Students is a document that will act as a guide for athletes to learn to protect and promote their Intellectual Property (IP).

The final users of this document are athletes, active or retired, of all ages and genders. It is also intended for young athletes at the beginning of their careers, athletes transitioning to another professional path, students of sports sciences or related disciplines, as well as coaches or staff members of sports organizations involved in supporting the above.

The IPR-A curriculum is designed to help all athletes—not only professionals but also amateurs, newcomers, and those balancing sports with other careers—easily understand what Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) are and why they matter. They will learn in a clear and practical way how to protect their personal identity, public image, and any creations or ideas related to them, so they don't lose their rights and can use them to benefit their career and life. At the same time, real-life case studies will be analyzed to help them better understand how these concepts apply in practice. Furthermore, the material will explain why Intellectual Property Rights are especially important for athletes pursuing a “Dual Career”—that is, those combining sports with a professional career. This will make the subject more engaging by clearly showing the benefits athletes can gain by focusing on this curriculum.

The program will cover topics such as:

- How to protect your name, reputation, and image
- The importance of trademarks for athletes
- How to register and protect your personal brand
- What you need to know about rights concerning photos, videos, or content involving you
- How intellectual property rights can help create business opportunities beyond sports.

Additionally, the curriculum will explain how individuals can register and protect their rights. Most people, including athletes, have limited knowledge about Intellectual Property Rights and especially about how to protect them effectively. Through this program, athletes will learn useful techniques and methods that can help increase their financial gains, both short-term and long-term. Finally, the curriculum will present the specificities of intellectual property legislation in each partner country (Greece, Cyprus, Portugal), preparing athletes for the different challenges they might face depending on where they live.

The curriculum will also provide valuable advice on how to approach intellectual property rights smartly and effectively, giving athletes a significant advantage in protecting and leveraging their rights, which will help them maximize



their career opportunities and financial success both during and after their athletic career. The curriculum is divided into 5 chapters.

Chapter 1 is titled “How intellectual property rights work and why athletes need to know about them”, and will explain the main features of IP, its several types (patents, trademarks, copyrights, etc.), along with the reasoning behind promoting IPR and the ways to effectively do so. Through this chapter, athletes will learn to identify what they can protect as their own creation or property and how this protection can help them in practice — for example, by preventing unauthorized use of their name, leveraging their personal brand commercially, and creating additional income streams.

Chapter 2 is titled “Intellectual Property Rights Management: National and International Environment”, and it will discuss the most relevant conventions of IPR that have taken place, along with their legislations. Moreover, it will guide the audience on how to register for each type of IP in the national and international legislative frameworks. With this chapter, athletes will learn how to protect their rights in different countries and register their name, logo, or even an innovative training device. For example, an athlete who has developed a new training program or app can secure their rights not only in their home country but also internationally, preventing others from using or exploiting their ideas illegally. This way, they safeguard their income and protect their reputation wherever they operate.

Chapter 3 is named “Beyond the game: understanding the global system that protects your IP”. This unit will showcase the most prominent organisations related to IPR. Chapter 3 introduces the main international organizations that protect intellectual property rights. Students will learn where to go to register and defend their brand globally. This knowledge also helps them work with companies, sponsors, and partners internationally, ensuring their rights are respected.

Chapter 4, titled “How IP works in each country and why it matters for athletes,” discusses the unique IPR legislative settings in each of the partner countries (Greece, Cyprus, Portugal), including valuable information on IP registration. Through this chapter, athletes will understand the specific rules and procedures in each country, helping them avoid mistakes in registration and effectively protect their rights wherever they compete or operate.

Finally, Chapter 5 is titled “Case Studies, Challenges and Tips for Athletes”. It will describe to aspiring dual-career athletes the potential challenges they may face on this road, while also providing them with insights on how to combat them and further grow their brand. These ideas will be enhanced by the use of case studies, as the experiences of well-known athletes with IPR will make the audience’s connection with the content of the curriculum easier.



3 HOW INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS WORK AND WHY ATHLETES NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THEM

Objectives

- Understand the main characteristics of IP
- Understand the different types of IP
- Comprehend the reasoning behind IP protection
- Learn how to identify, appraise, exploit, and finance intellectual assets

Intellectual property management isn't just a matter for lawyers or big companies. Today, every athlete, whether just starting out or already well known possesses valuable intangible assets that deserve protection, such as their name, image, training methods, or personal brand.

Understanding the basic processes and steps required to register and manage these rights (IPR) is the first essential move. This chapter provides the core knowledge athletes need to understand **what intellectual property is, how it is protected, and why managing it with awareness and strategy matters.**

Making good use of this knowledge can be the difference between an athlete whose image is used freely by others, and one who actively protects and leverages their value, both on and off the field.

3.1 Definition of Intellectual Property

First of all, before delving into the specifics of IPR protection and promotion, it is imperative to explain what an Intellectual Property Right (IPR) is. It is an exclusive right, meaning that only the holder of this right, or someone with their permission, is allowed to use it. Yet, this alone does not fully explain what an IPR is. For athletes, intellectual property often includes personal elements such as their name, image, signature, logo, slogans, or even training methods and digital content. These are all assets that can be used in sponsorships, merchandise, media, or business ventures. Understanding what counts as an IPR helps athletes recognise what needs protection, and how to prevent others from using their identity or work without permission.

To fully understand what an Intellectual Property Right (IPR) is, we must first explore the broader concept of Intellectual Property (IP), since IPRs are part of it. Intellectual property is exactly what the term suggests: a form of property. This means it belongs to a specific person or entity who holds full control over it. Unlike tangible assets (like houses, cars, or land), intellectual property is intangible; it has no physical form. Yet, it can still be registered, transferred, generate income, or even serve as an investment.

For athletes, this means that any creative or commercial activity linked to their identity, such as developing a product, partnering with a company, producing digital content, or coining a personal slogan, can be considered intellectual property.



Recognizing these elements as property is the first step toward making informed decisions about how to protect, manage, and benefit from them throughout their athletic and post-athletic careers.

Its identity as a property allows it to be:

- **Sold:** e.g., an athlete sells the rights to a personal slogan or logo to a sportswear company
- **Bought:** e.g., buying the rights to use a retired athlete's name for a new product line.
- **Leased or rented:** e.g., temporarily licensing image rights to appear in an advertising campaign.
- **Passed under a will:** e.g., image rights or royalties from content passed on to family members.
- **Assigned to someone else:** e.g., assigning trademark rights to a business partner or manager for handling sponsorship deals.

This characteristic allows it to be easily reproduced and take many forms, such as:

- Becoming economic rights for their creators
- Being utilised for commercial exploitation by its owner
- Becoming capital expenditure
- Becoming the transfer of technology
- Enhancing cultural development

3.2 Why should someone protect Intellectual Property (IP)?

3.2.1 Athletes

First, it is of the utmost importance to explain why an athlete should protect their IP. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, international legislation for Intellectual Property has been established since the 19th century. This became a reality due to the need for people to protect their IP. Ever since then, countless individuals, including many athletes (as will be seen in Chapter 5), have capitalised on this opportunity. The reasoning behind an athlete protecting their IP is multifaceted, as it enables them to:

- prevent others from using their IP
- prevent others from imitating their product or technology
- acquire financing from outside sources by providing leverage
- sell or trade their IPR
- license it
- create brand loyalty for a product or technology

All of these uses ring true for any athlete. However, athletes experience an increased necessity for protecting their IPR, due to the enhanced limelight that they are under. Athletes are often presented or seen as symbols of physical and social



excellence, which means that more focus is put on them. Yet, IP protection allows them to:

- ensure that their brand and likeness are not taken advantage of. The increased attention towards them makes them prime candidates for exploitation by ill-spirited individuals.
- ensure their financial stability during and after their athletic career. Protecting one's IPR allows them to gain funds from advertising and the use of their likeness. These are passive funds, which means that, even if the athlete does not actively promote their brand, they can still receive money if others use their name or likeness.
- to open up new, post-career opportunities, as the careers of athletes are, often, short-lived.
- to ensure their legacy, as protection of IP can last for several years after the athlete has retired.

The protection of IP is especially important for athletes, after their retirement from sports competition. As seen in the table below, in several of the professions that athletes follow post-retirement, the use of their previous IP can become useful for their professional growth (e.g. business owner, salesperson, etc.). By continuing to protect their IP, former athletes can be put in an advantageous position, in regard to their new career paths, as they can utilise their IP in the marketing of their products and services. Not only that but understanding IP and its practical and legal intricacies is essential for athletes. IPR law regarding the sale and purchasing of products is rather complicated and, without the required knowledge, a former athlete can be left vulnerable to exploitation, either to unnecessary taxation or to the manipulation of their assets by third parties. This is especially true in the contemporary world, where digital content reigns supreme over most forms of marketing. Many athletes, whether still active or retired, turn to entrepreneurship and leverage their personal reputation to promote products or services, often through websites and digital media. However, few possess the legal knowledge required to protect and properly utilize their intellectual property. Effectively promoting intellectual property assets in the digital sphere is a skill that many former athletes or aspiring entrepreneurs have yet to develop. Comprehending the legal framework around domain names, computer programs, website contents, product catalogues and promotional leaflets can help an aspiring businessperson grow their business rapidly.



Table 1: Professions Athletes Follow Post-Retirement

SALESPERSON	27%
COACH	23%
BUSINESS OWNER	10%
FINANCIAL ANALYST	5%
TEACHER	5%
BUSINESS CONSULTANT	4%
MARKETING EXPERT	4%

3.2.2 States

Understanding why an athlete would protect their IP can be easily evident. IP protection benefits them financially. A similar reasoning is behind states deciding to promote the protection of IP. While states cannot protect their own IP, similar to individuals, they can profit from others doing so. A larger number of IP applications leads to increased expenditures, which, in turn, strengthens the flow of the economy, a result that is beneficial to the state. Yet, there are a few other reasons why a state should promote IP protection, including:

- the promotion of research & development efforts
- the promotion of marketing and advertising efforts
- the elimination of any potential freeloaders
- the insurance that citizens are content and loyal

3.3 Types of Intellectual Property

There are several types of IP, each of them with its own unique uses and characteristics. The most prevalent ones are described below:

- **Patent:** It is an exclusive right granted for an invention. By acquiring a patent, the owner protects it from its commercial exploitation by anyone else. It is a territorial right; thus, it is only applicable in accordance with national/regional laws. It generally lasts for 20 years after its filing date. Yet, there is the possibility of an extension of 5 years. *For example, an athlete might patent an innovative training device or a simple fitness app to maintain full control over how it is used or sold.*
- **Utility Model:** Similar to patents, they protect new technical inventions by granting a limited exclusive right to prevent others from commercially exploiting them. Further, their registration varies from country to country. They usually protect inventions that make small improvements to a product or have a short commercial life (6-15 years from filing). *For example, an athlete or coach might register a utility model for an improved grip on training equipment or an attachment that helps perform an exercise*



more safely.

- **Design:** It is the appearance of a product or its decoration. By registering a design, one gains an exclusive right to its usage and protects it from being used by anyone else. Its protection lasts for 5 years at a time, but, with recurrent payment, it can last up to 25 years.

Many athletes choose to protect the design of their sportswear, shoes, or products featuring their personal logo, so they can keep control over their image and style in the market.

- **Trademark:** It is a mark that separates products and services that a company manufactures and produces from the ones of other companies. It can be any kind of mark that can be represented graphically (figures, words, letters, numbers, layouts, and even some sounds). It lasts for 10 years from the day of registration. Nevertheless, it can be renewed for indefinite 10-year terms.

In the sports world, trademarks are commonly used by athletes to protect their name, catchphrases, or visual brand elements when launching personal products, signing endorsement deals, or building a public image. This legal protection helps maintain ownership and control over how their identity is used.

- **Copyright:** It is right of a creator to protect their creative and artistic works (books, music, paintings, sculptures, films, computer programs, etc.). A copyright can be either economic, which allows its owner to derive financial reward from its use, or moral, which protects the author's non-economic interests. Moreover, it can only be the property of a natural person. A company can only acquire a copyright by making an agreement with its creator.

Athletes who produce content — like training videos, promotional music, or who contribute to digital works such as e-books or apps — benefit from securing copyright protection, as it ensures they keep control over how their work is used, shared, and monetised.

Finally, its length varies, as seen in the table below:

Table 2: Copyright Length

Literary, Musical, Artistic and Dramatic Works	Author's Lifetime + 70 years
Films	Director/Composer/Author's Lifetime + 70 years
Sound Recordings, Cable/TV and Radio Broadcasts	50 years from the 1st broadcast
Publisher's Right, Typographical Layout	25 years



- *Trade secret*: All the confidential matters that are important for a company's business that are not protected by other IPRs.
In sports, this could include a coach's unique training regimen, a team's nutrition plan, or performance data analysis techniques that are kept secret to maintain an edge over competitors.
- *Geographical Indication (GI)*: A sign that is used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin (e.g. Scotch whiskey). When granted a GI, one gains the exclusive right of labelling the specific product with the designated place of origin.
- *For athletes, this can be relevant when collaborating with local producers to promote sports-related goods — such as a clothing line or gear made in a region known for its craftsmanship. Using a GI adds authenticity, value, and prestige to both the product and the athlete's brand.*

The examples above clearly show that knowledge of intellectual property rights isn't reserved only for professional athletes with major contracts or international exposure. Any athlete, even at an amateur or semi-professional level who, e.g. designs a personal logo, develops a new training tool, or creates digital content like workout videos or training programs, can benefit from understanding how to protect and manage their work. These skills can empower athletes to take ownership of their ideas and build value around their personal brand, regardless of the level at which they compete.

Understanding and making use of intellectual property is not a luxury, it is an essential skill for anyone involved in the sports world who wants to protect their efforts, build a sustainable personal brand, and explore professional opportunities within and beyond athletic competition. Whether you are an active or retired athlete, a young athlete just starting out, a coach, a student of sports sciences, or a staff member supporting athletes through their journey, gaining IP knowledge can offer valuable tools for long-term growth and success.

3.4 How athletes can identify, value, use and fund their intellectual assets

3.4.1 Knowing the worth of your IP

To identify their potential intellectual assets, athletes can follow a simple, 7-step procedure:

1. Find public consultation organisations
2. Create a detailed table of all their intellectual assets
3. Execute a detailed cost/benefit analysis for each intellectual asset
4. Each asset worthy of protection needs to be assigned a specific method of protection
5. Analyse which assets are worthy of protection (cost vs payback)
6. Begin drafting of applications for protection
7. Apply funding for protection costs



Table 3: Steps of identification and appraisal of IP assets

Intellectual Property	Description	Owner	Product Life	Usage	Importance in Business	Estimated Value (€)	Protection Method
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Practical Exercise

Each student should find one Intellectual Asset they believe they have and utilise Table 3 to find if it is worth protecting (Estimated Value can be found through a quick online search).

3.4.2 Maximising the value of your intellectual assets in and beyond sport

In order to successfully exploit their intellectual assets, athletes need to adopt an IPR strategy that aligns with their business goals, whether that means launching a personal brand, endorsing products, creating training programs, or developing digital content. A valuable tool in this process is the IP portfolio: a structured record of all identified intellectual property rights (IPRs), such as trademarks, copyrighted material, and design rights. For athletes, this might include their name and image rights, branded merchandise, signature moves captured in digital form, or even original training methods. An IP portfolio helps lay the foundation for a comprehensive protection plan, essential for safeguarding these valuable assets. Without identifying and monitoring potential third-party infringements (e.g., unauthorized use of an athlete's name on social media or counterfeit merchandise), both the athlete and their IP remain exposed and vulnerable.

Athletes can further protect their intellectual property rights by making sure that any content or branding they create does not unintentionally infringe on the rights of others, for example, by using logos, names, or slogans that are already legally protected. A basic check of other athletes, brands, or businesses in the same space can help avoid legal conflicts. For instance, before launching a personal logo or fitness app, it's important to make sure no one else is already using something identical or confusingly similar. This search is much easier when it comes to larger companies, as their IP assets are often depicted on their websites or public legal documents. For more detailed checks, especially when launching a commercial product or registering a new trademark, athletes can seek help from professional IP search firms that specialize in identifying existing rights and possible conflicts.



3.4.3 How athletes can finance the use of their Intellectual Property

Financing intellectual property assets builds on the steps discussed earlier, identifying, protecting, and organizing your IP. These assets can help athletes convince potential sponsors, partners, or investors to provide funding for their projects. In some cases, registered IPRs, such as an athlete's logo, a branded clothing line, or a unique training method, can even be used as collateral when applying for funding, sponsorship, or business loans. Having a clear IP portfolio is crucial for athletes, as different sponsors, clubs, or business partners may value different aspects of their brand, such as their name and likeness, signature moves, social media presence, personal training programs, or even planned collaborations with sports brands. That's why it's important to include your IP assets in your business plan and have them properly valued by professionals, so that others can clearly understand what your ideas, brand, or content are truly worth. This type of support, such as identifying existing IP rights or valuing your own, can be provided by specialised IP law firms or national intellectual property organisations (e.g., in Greece: Hellenic Industrial Property Organisation, in Cyprus: Department of Registrar of Companies and IP, and in Portugal: Foundation of Science and Technology).

Furthermore, athletes can receive financing through a licensing agreement. This agreement is a legal, written contract, where the property owner, who in this case is the athlete, permits another party to use their IP assets in return for financial or other forms of compensation. Usually, this option is beneficial for individuals who do not have the financial capital to protect or promote their IP assets. In this case, a licensing agreement can provide them with financial earnings that they would not otherwise receive. However, athletes who have the capital to protect and promote their IP should not look into licensing agreements as a viable option because their potential earnings would be much higher if they kept full ownership of their IP assets.



4 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS MANAGEMENT: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Objectives

- Learn about the different conventions that laid the foundation for IPR law and their respective policies, to understand how an athlete's name, image, and achievements are protected across countries.
- Learn how to register IPR in the domestic and international frameworks, so athletes can legally protect their personal brand, training methods, or commercial ventures.

4.1 International conventions for IP: How they affect athletes

For athletes who want to protect and make use of their image, brand, or original ideas, it's important to understand the basic international rules that govern intellectual property. Athletes need to adhere to the established regulations regarding IPR, as ignoring them would leave them liable to prosecution, and they could risk losing the rights to their IP assets. The most relevant pieces of IPR legislation for this subject have been established for many years, through a number of IP conventions, the most important of which will be described below.

Understanding the international conventions that form the foundation of intellectual property (IP) law is essential for athletes who want to protect and manage their image, name, brand, or original creations, especially when these are shared, promoted, or sold across borders. Agreements like the **Paris Convention**, the **Berne Convention**, and the **TRIPS Agreement** define how IP rights such as trademarks, designs, and copyrights are protected between countries. This matters directly to athletes, who often compete internationally, endorse products, or build personal brands with global reach. These conventions ensure that an athlete's rights can be recognised and enforced outside their home country, helping prevent misuse of their content, identity, or products. Other tools, like the **Patent Cooperation Treaty** and WIPO's **Digital Agenda**, offer further support for those creating digital content or launching innovative products. The sections that follow explain these frameworks in simple terms, focusing on how they apply specifically to the modern athlete.

4.1.1 Paris Convention (1883)

The Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property included 3 main categories:

- **National Treatment:** each contracting state must grant the same protection that it grants to its own nationals to nationals of other contracting states
- **Right of Priority (for patents, marks, designs):** after the filing of an application in a contracting state, the individual has a certain period of time, where they can file for protection in any other state





Common Rules:

1. Patents granted for the same invention in different states are
2. independent of each other.
3. All marks filed for registration are independent in each state, which means that a state cannot refuse the registration of a mark solely if another has refused it.
4. Industrial designs must be protected in each state, and protection may not be forfeited on the ground that the design was not manufactured in that state.

4.1.2 Berne Convention (1886)

The Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works focuses on the minimum required standards for copyright protection and includes 3 main principles:

- Works originating in one contracting state must be given the same protection in all others.
- Automatic protection: the previous regulation stays true even if the work fails to satisfy formalities, under the national law of another member country.
- Any protection, other than the minimum, can be refuted in another country if it ceases in the state of origin.

4.1.3 Trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS) agreement (1995)

The TRIPS agreement was the first to introduce IP law into the multilateral trading system, and it includes 3 main features:

- Standards: It sets out the minimum standards of protection to be provided by each member state.
- Enforcement: It sets certain general principles applicable to all IPR enforcement procedures on the domestic level.
- Dispute Settlement: It makes disputes between WTO Members about the respect of the TRIPS obligations subject to the WTO's dispute settlement procedures.

4.1.4 Other Provisions

- WIPO's Digital Agenda (1999): a set of guidelines and goals that seek solutions to problems raised by the impact of electronic commerce on IPRs.
- The Patent Cooperation Treaty (2004) makes it possible to seek patent protection for an invention simultaneously in each of a large number of countries by filing an "international" patent application.

Case Study: Why Section 4.1 matters?

LeBron James and the Power of IP:



As outlined in section 4.1, International Conventions for IP: How They Affect Athletes, international agreements allow athletes to protect their name, image, personal brand, and original creations beyond their home country. LeBron James provides a clear example of how these rights can be used not only to secure commercial assets but also to promote values and drive social impact.

Over the years, James has registered several trademarks with meanings that extend far beyond basketball:

- **“Strive 4 Greatness”** serves as a global motivational message.
- **“I Promise School”** is linked to his foundation’s educational work in Akron, his hometown.
- **“More than an Athlete”** became a powerful slogan during the **#BlackLivesMatter** movement, advocating for athletes’ right to speak out on social issues and challenging the notion that their voices should be confined to the field.

By protecting these trademarks internationally, James maintains control over their use and meaning. This enables him to build a brand that reflects who he is, not just as an athlete, but as a person and public figure with values, goals, and influence.

This case shows how intellectual property, when properly managed, can become a tool for athletes to express identity, protect their image, and shape their legacy both on and off the field.

4.2 How athletes can register their IPR in their own country and abroad

Nevertheless, theoretical knowledge of previous IP conventions is not enough to secure one’s IPRs. Athletes need to be informed and educated regarding the practical knowledge required to register their IPRs. Each state has its own domestic processes when it comes to registering IPR, but there are also cases where athletes can register in the international framework.

4.2.1 Registering patents and utility models

These two types of IP are grouped together because, in addition to having similar structure and function, they follow the same registration process nationally and internationally. For athletes who may have developed a training device e.g., a performance-related app, or an innovative method, understanding how to protect such inventions through patents or utility models is essential.

First, in order to apply for a patent or a utility model in one’s country, one needs to file their application in their national IP office. In Greece, it is the Hellenic Industrial Property Organisation, while in Cyprus, it is the Department of Registrar of Companies and Intellectual Property, and in Portugal, it is the Portuguese Institute of Industrial Property. In all of these instances, the application needs to be accurate to every minute detail, as a simple mistake can derail the registration process.



Second, the international system does not produce international versions of patents and utility models. Instead, since the PCT of 1978, it has produced a number of national patents that apply to their targeted countries. To file said application, an athlete can either refer to the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) or the European Patent Office (EPO). Further, they can avoid these institutions by filing in their domestic IPO office, with their application, then, being transferred to the aforementioned organisations.

4.2.2 Registering your brand name or logo (Trademarks)

Similar to the registration of patents, the national registration of trademarks happens through a specific IP office. Yet, this application can happen either in paper form or online. In Greece, the designated office is the Directorate of Trademarks of the General Secretariat of Commerce and Consumer Protection, which is a part of the Greek Ministry of Development and Investment. In Cyprus, the Department of Registrar of Companies and Intellectual Property has the same role, whereas in Portugal the role is filled by the Portuguese Institute of Industrial Property.

The international route for registration is slightly different. There are three options for any athlete considering filing for trademark registration:

1. Using the national registration system, similar to patent registration.
2. Using the Madrid Protocol. With this option, the applicant sends an application to their national IP office with the names of all the countries, where they desire the protection to apply and, then, the application is sent to WIPO, where the protection is registered.
3. Using the European Community Trademark, where the registered protection applies simultaneously to all EU countries.

4.2.3 How to register and protect your designs

For athletes, “designs” refer to the visual appearance of products or equipment connected to their brand, such as sportswear, logos on merchandise, accessories, or even custom gear. Protecting these designs ensures that no one else can copy or commercially exploit the unique look and feel of something associated with the athlete.

Domestic applications for the protection of designs happen through the national IP offices (Greece: Hellenic Industrial Property Organisation, Cyprus: Department of Registrar of Companies and Intellectual Property, Portugal: Portuguese Institute of Industrial Property). Yet, along with the application, interested parties are required to submit their designs and proof of payment for the publication and protection fees. However, international registration is not as complicated. A design can be protected over the entire EU through the Community Design Regulation that functions through the Office for Harmonisation in the Internal Market (OHIM). The application can be submitted straight to the OHIM or through a national office.



5 BEYOND THE GAME: UNDERSTANDING THE GLOBAL SYSTEM THAT PROTECTS YOUR IP

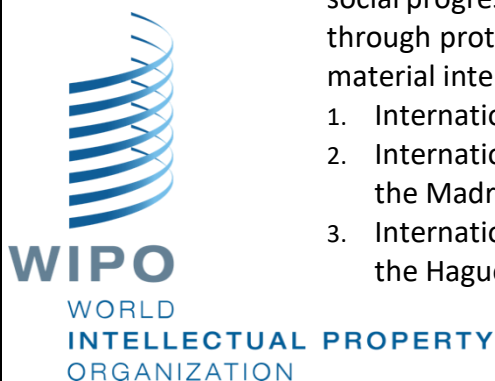
Objectives

- Learn about the most prominent international IPR organisations, a brief but essential overview that explains how the rights of athletes (such as name, image, branding, or original work) are protected when used or recognised beyond national borders. Understanding who ensures that protection is key in today's global sports and business environment.

The international IPR management system is consisted of a number of international organisations, each with its own functions and responsibilities. As a whole, they manage all IP related issues. The most prominent international IPR management organisations are the following:

- **World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO):** It is located in Geneva, Switzerland. Its main focus is the on the economic, cultural, and social progress of mankind. Further, it promotes international cooperation through protecting IPRs, while, also, balancing its focus on the moral and material interests of creators. Its main services are the following:

1. International protection of patents, which is achieved through the PCT
2. International registration of trademarks, which is carried out through the Madrid System
3. International registration of industrial designs, which occurs through the Hague System



- **World Trade Organisation:** It is, also, located in Geneva, Switzerland, and deals with the rules of predictability and transparency that trading nations need to adhere to. Furthermore, it is the institution that established the TRIPS agreement, which, as discussed before, is the most vital set of regulations regarding international trade.
- **European Patent Office (EPO):** It is located in Munich, Germany. It is responsible for processing and registering all applications of the European patent system. Patents involving more than one country, after being registered through a national IP office, are sent to the EPO to be put into effect.
- **Office for Harmonisation in the Internal Market (OHIM):** It is located in Alicante, Spain, and it is responsible for the





registering of all European trademarks and designs. This is due to its registrations being valid for all EU member states.

- Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN): It is a non-profit organisation, located in Los Angeles, California. Its main responsibility is the administration of domain names of website addresses. Upper-level domain names, including websites ending with .com, .net, and .info are administered through this organisation. It has, also, created a process to solve any disputes regarding domain name disagreements.



6 HOW IP WORKS IN EACH COUNTRY AND WHY IT MATTERS FOR ATHLETES

Objectives

- Learn about the differences in IPR legislation in each partner country, to understand how an athlete's rights, like image, branding, or creations, are protected depending on where they live or compete.
- Learn the different costs of IPR application and renewal in each of the partner countries

The above organisations have played a major role in shaping the IPR legislation of many countries. Nevertheless, residents of different states have to be aware of the legal specifics of their country's domestic legislation. While they are influenced by international regulations, domestic IPR laws have their own unique features that can differentiate them from the rest. In this regard, Greece, Cyprus, and Portugal share some similarities. As for who is eligible to apply for IPR protection, all three governments agree that this right applies to every natural person or legal entity. The Portuguese legal system even emphasises the inclusion of authorised representatives and assignees as parties that have the right to application.

For athletes, this means they can apply for IP protection not only personally, but also through an authorised agent, manager, or other representative, making the process more flexible and accessible.

Furthermore, all three states adhere to the notion that IPR infringements should be punishable by law. This rings true for all types of IPRs, such as trademarks, copyrights, patents, etc. For example, in Greece, the violation of trademark law can lead to criminal sanctions, according to Article 45 of Law 4679/2020. In Cyprus, the illegal use of trademarks is punished by a penalty fee [article 628, law 63(I)/2020], whereas the illegal use of copyrights [law 4(I)/2002] and patents [law 16(I)/1998] can even be punishable by imprisonment.



Not only that, but all three countries have established consequences, in case of failure to pay for renewal fees. In Portugal, these vary depending on the type of IPR and can include the loss of protection, legal rights, and the potential for third parties to exploit the lapse in rights. In Greece and Cyprus, a grace period is given to the owner of the rights, where an additional fee of 25% is added to the initial renewal fee for every month that passes. Yet, after the lapse of 6 months, the owner of the IPR loses all privileges and ceases to own it. For athletes, this could mean losing exclusive control over a logo, training brand, or even sponsored material, making timely renewal essential to avoid unauthorized use.

Moreover, potential applicants, including athletes, need to be aware of the costs that the application and renewal of these rights can have, as, sometimes, the financial burden cannot be bearable. This is especially important for athletes who are just starting to build their brand or launching personal ventures, where budgeting for IP protection can be critical. The exact cost for each IP type is depicted below.

Table 4: Application and renewal Fees in Greece

Trademarks	Euros	Utility Models	Euros	Registered Designs	Euros	Patents	Euros
Filing Fee (1 class)	100 (online) 120 (paper)	Filing Fee	50	Filing Fee	100	Filing Fee	50
Filing Fee (additional class)	20 (per class)	Certificate Grant Fee	100	Supplementary Fee (up to 50)	10 (for each)	Simple Search Report Fee	300
Renewal Fee (1 class)	90 (online) 110 (paper)	Protection (1st year)	0	Publication Fee	30	Patent Grant Fees	150
Renewal Fee (additional class)	20 (per class)	Protection (3rd year)	20	Supplementary Publication Fee (up to 50)	10 (for each)	Fee for registering assignments, licenses, status changes	200
		Protection (7th year)	100	Protection Fee (5 years)	0	Protection (1st year)	0
				1st Renewal	0	Protection (2nd Year)	0
				2nd Renewal	100	Protection (3rd year)	50
				5th Renewal	250	Protection (20th year)	1.100

**Table 5: Application and Renewal Fees in Cyprus**

Trademarks	Euros	Registered Designs	Euros	Patents	Euros
Filing Fee (1 class)	129 (online) 141 (paper)	Filing Fee	85,43	Filing Fee	191
Filing Fee (additional class)	94 (online) 102 (paper)	Publication Fee	10 (optional)	International Filing Fee	1381
Renewal Fee (1 class)	73 (online) 75 (paper)	Protection Fee (5 years)	51,26	Protection (1st year)	0
Renewal Fee (additional class)	59 (online) 60 (paper)	1st Renewal	85,43	Protection (2nd Year)	0
		2nd Renewal	139,69	Protection (3rd year)	50
		3rd Renewal	170,86	Protection (20th year)	660
		4th Renewal	256,29		

Table 6: Application and Renewal Fees in Portugal

Trademarks	Euros	Utility Models	Euros	Registered Designs	Euros	Patents	Euros
Filing Fee (1 class)	127 (online) 159 (paper)	Filing Fee	107,51 (online) 143,34 (paper)	Filing Fee	53 (online) 66 (paper)	Filing Fee	107,51 (online) 143,34 (paper)
Filing Fee (additional class)	32 (online) 38 (paper)	Examination Fee	144,38	Supplementary Fee (up to 50)	13 (online) 16 (paper)	Search Fee	264,98
Renewal Fee (10 years)	215	Search Fee	264,98	Protection Fee (5 years)	80	Examination Fee	144,36
		Protection (1st year)	43			Protection (1st year)	43
		Protection (3rd year)	43			Protection (2nd Year)	43
						Protection (3rd year)	43
		Protection (7th year)	214,93			Protection (20th year)	322,36



7 CASE STUDIES, CHALLENGES, AND TIPS FOR ATHLETES

Objectives

- Learn about different cases of athletes and their unique experiences with IPR protection, and why understanding these cases can help you make informed decisions about your own rights and opportunities.
- Learn about different challenges that can occur with IPR protection, knowledge that can help you stay prepared, reduce risks, and make more informed decisions about your future.
- Comprehend several tips that can help with IPR protection and offer useful guidance to navigate the process with more confidence and clarity.

7.1 Case Studies

Since the creation of IPR law, countless athletes have utilised it to protect their IP. Some have been successful in this endeavour, while others have faced obstacles, either due to their own fault or due to the circumstances they were in. To provide a better understanding of said challenges, along with tips that athletes should follow, both of which will be addressed next, this part of the training seminar will focus on case studies of athletes and their experiences with IPR protection.

Understanding these real-life examples is important because they highlight how IPR decisions can impact an athlete's career positively or negatively. By learning from others' successes and mistakes, you can gain practical insight into what to do, what to avoid, and how to approach your own intellectual property with greater awareness and preparation.

The case study topics will be the following:

- Michael Jordan (The Jumpman Logo): The Jumpman logo, owned by Nike was inspired by a picture of Michael Jordan, taken by photographer Jacobus Rentmeester for Life Magazine, in 1984. In 2015, the artist sued Nike for copyright infringement, but, as Nike had modified the picture's template just enough to argue plausible deniability, he lost the court battle.

***Lesson:** Subtle changes and strategic intellectual property management can protect brands against legal challenges, highlighting the importance of careful IP handling in sports marketing.*



- Michael Jordan (Qiaodan Sports Legal Battle): In 2007, despite Nike's protection of the Jordan brand, Chinese sports company Qiaodan Sports filed for protection of trademarks similar to Jordan and his brand ("Qiao dan" = tall red). In 2009, Nike filings for 5 Jordan-related trademarks were rejected, due to Qiaodan Sports'





previous filings. Despite Michael Jordan's efforts to invalidate said trademarks, the Chinese sports company won the legal battle and still has these rights.

Lesson: *Athletes should preemptively register their brand elements (names, logos, etc.) to avoid such issues*

- Serena Williams (Copyright Strategy): Due to her fast and effective filings for IPR protection, the tennis legend has avoided any serious threats to her IP, while simultaneously managing to promote her own interests, along with empowering many young, black and female entrepreneurs.

Lesson: *Athletes' awareness and action towards filing for their trademarks can, not only protect them, but help them and other flourish*

- Usain Bolt (Victory Pose): In 2022, Usain Bolt filed to trademark the image of his victory pose as a logo in the US. Despite poses not being considered a copyrightable item, Bolt's knowledge of the subject led him to file his pose as a logo, thus, avoiding any claims against its validity.

Lesson: *Again, monitoring your IP and being aware of the existing legislation is vital for its protection*

- Kylian Mbappe (Celebration): Following in Bolt's footsteps, young football superstar, Kylian Mbappe, has trademarked his own signature celebration, along with his initials, as a logo, allowing him to utilise it as a symbol for different business ventures.

Lesson: *Proactively protecting personal trademarks empowers athletes to build and expand their brand identity beyond sports, opening new commercial opportunities.*

- Tom Brady (Tom Terrific): Over his career, the legendary quarterback has filed for several trademarks regarding his likeness (e.g. TB, TB12, TAMPA BRADY, etc.), earning millions of dollars in the process. However, in 2019 he filed for the trademark "Tom Terrific". Unfortunately for Brady, that nickname was closely connected to former baseball player Tom Seaver, and this led to his application being denied.

Lesson: *Athletes should meticulously study their potential trademarks before applying for them*

- Ronda Rousey (Focus on Privacy): Similar to many other famous athletes, Rousey has earned a lot of money by trademarking her IP. Yet, recently she began shying away from doing so, as it showcased a positive correlation with the increase of the spotlight that was put on her person, a development that she did not enjoy, due to her recently becoming a mother. In an effort to protect herself and her family from the public eye, she has minimised her aggression in protecting her IPRs.

Lesson: *Athletes should carefully choose how much IP they are willing*



to go after, as it may have an impact on their public image

- **Lebron James (Focus on Social Activism and Inclusivity):** The all-time great basketball player stands out, in terms of his IPR protection, as a number of his trademarks, such as “Strive 4 Greatness”, “I Promise School”, and “More than an Athlete” have been utilised to promote equality and civil rights. By doing so, he has showcased that IP protection can yield more rewards than simply funds.
Lesson: An athlete’s brand and IP can allow them to achieve things far beyond the realm of sports
- **Pat Riley (3-peat):** The legendary basketball coach and executive has proven that protecting one’s IP can turn a failure into a success. In 1988, he trademarked the phrase “three-peat”, as the Los Angeles Lakers, the team he coached were en route to win a 3rd straight NBA championship. Unfortunately for him, they did not. Yet, over the next decade and a half, four different teams managed to accomplish a three-peat in the NBA and NFL (1993, 1998, 2000, 2002). Each of these instances led to Riley receiving a wealthy amount of compensation for his trademark, thus, making him a winner in the long term.
Lesson: Athletes and sporting figures can capitalise on certain trends or gaps in IP protection to cultivate large amounts of IP earnings
- **Shaquille O’Neal (Shaqtus Dispute):** In 2008, the NBA Center was traded to the Phoenix Suns, and unofficially coined the term “Big Shaqtus”, a wordplay on the word “cactus”, playing off his own name and the city’s dry atmosphere. Yet, before he managed to trademark the phrase, an Arizona clothing company, called True Fan Logo Inc., registered the trademark and began using it in merchandise. In 2009, the company sued ESPN over the use of the nickname, which, in turn, led to O’Neal countersuing them and winning the rights to the “Shaqtus trademark”.
Lesson: An athlete’s image and IP rights can become powerful tools for creating impact, generating value, and building a lasting presence beyond competition.
- **Lance Armstrong (Livestrong):** In 1997, the world champion cyclist trademarked the “Livestrong” brand for his foundation amid his battle with cancer. This brand became a phenomenon with the athlete and the foundation strongly profiting from it, even after his doping scandal in 2012.
Lesson: Trademarking a brand can create lasting value and protection beyond an individual’s active involvement, ensuring the brand’s legacy continues despite personal setbacks.
- **Robert Griffin III (Early Trademarking):** The former NFL quarterback filed for several trademarks during the early part of his career, including for phrases like “Dream Big Live Bigger,” “Unbelievably Believable,” “Light You Up,” and “No Pressure No Diamonds”, and “Know Your Why”. As his career did not pan out as expected, he let most of these trademarks lapse. Nevertheless, this move was considered a shrewd one, as he did not hesitate to ensure that his IP was



not going to be exploited by others without his permission.

Lesson: *Early trademark applications can be a very shrewd move for IP protection*

- Giannis Antetokounmpo (Risks of trademark Protection): In 2019 and 2020, the athlete and his lawyers filed 13 trademark infringement lawsuits in federal court against a variety of people, who were unlawfully profiting off his name and likeness. In one specific case, a graphic designer and a Milwaukee Bucks fan, Monte Eady, created a T-shirt as a means of honouring the player and sold less than 20 units online. Yet, Antetokounmpo's lawyers reached out to him and he was forced to pay a cash settlement. This led to negative publicity for the basketball player, as he was perceived as rich and greedy by fans.

Lesson: *Athletes need to be careful about how they approach the protection of their IP, as their efforts may, sometimes, be misinterpreted*

Discussion Prompt

Which case study did you find the most interesting and why?

7.2 Challenges with IPR

Despite having the necessary knowledge, regarding the intricacies of IPR law in the domestic and international sphere, athletes and other individuals can still fall victim to several challenges that come along, during the process of IPR protection and exploitation. These challenges are:

- Lack of awareness: Many athletes are not aware of the several different forms of protecting their IP. While understanding certain IPR laws is vital, athletes need to be well-versed in all facets of IPR regulations and processes.
- Unauthorised use of name and likeness: Several athletes face challenges when they do not protect their IP through official channels. These issues can arise if a third party uses their IP and they cannot do anything to prevent them. There are even cases, where the athletes themselves try to use their likeness and are met with obstacles, as other parties have acquired their IPRs first (e.g. Jordan and Qiaodan Sports).
- Contractual issues: Athletes may sign contracts with teams, sponsors, or other entities that can undermine or manipulate their IP. This can happen due to their own negligence, as the process of studying contracts before signing is vital for the protection of one's IPRs
- Delay in registration: Failing to register IPRs in time can leave an athlete's IP vulnerable to manipulation (e.g. the Shaqtus Dispute)
- Issues with international protections: Athletes with global reach can face difficulties filing for international IPR protection because each national legal system has its own features and complexities.
- Social media challenges: Athletes' IP, also, be in danger with their use of social media, as many individuals will try to infringe on their IP to promote their own



agendas. However, not all, IP infringement through social media is mean-spirited and a strong response from the athlete and their legal team can, sometimes, lead to fan backlash, thus damaging their own value (e.g. Giannis Antetokounmpo's strong response to the infringement of his IP).

- Balancing privacy and publicity: For famous athletes, it can be very difficult to ensure the protection of all of their IPRs, without undermining their personal privacy and vice versa (e.g. Ronda Rousey's focus on privacy).
- Technological evolution: Advancements in technology, such as digital content, virtual reality and e-sports, create new forms of IP that require attention and protection by the athletes.
- Infringement and piracy: Athletes can become victims of the unauthorised use of their IP for merchandising purposes (e.g. the Jordan brand, the Shaqtus dispute, etc.)
- Protection of trade secrets: Protecting confidential information, such as training methods, strategies, or business practices can be challenging for an athlete and their contracts with their trainers, coaches, and support staff need to reflect that.
- Enforcement and litigation costs: Filing for IP protection can become very costly, especially for less famous athletes, and legal infringement cases can become a heavy financial burden on them.

7.3 IPR Management Tips for Athletes

In order to avoid these aforementioned challenges, along with any other obstacles that may come in their way, athletes need to follow these guidelines:

- Educate yourself: Athletes need to focus on deeply understanding IPRs and their several intricacies, along with their respective legislations, to avoid any unwanted exploitation of their IP. Knowing how to register and protect IPR, also, minimises the cost of these processes, as less outside help is needed (e.g. Usain Bolt).
- Consult with legal professionals: Working with experienced personnel minimises the possibility of brand manipulation, as others would be employed to monitor your IP for you. This is especially evident in cases of international IPR protection, where legislations vary and are complex.
- Register trademarks and logos: These two types of IP are a large part of an athlete's brand, which is intrinsically linked to their professional identity. Protecting them is of the utmost importance (e.g. Usain Bolt, Kylian Mbappe).
- Protect your personal brand: As stated, trademarks, including one's name, likeness, and personal catchphrases are an important part of an athlete's brand. It is necessary to protect them from any threats (e.g. Serena Williams, Robert Griffin III).
- Copyright your creative works: Athletes need to pay attention when registering any of their creative works (videos, books, music, photos, etc.) with third parties, as they can be the foundation of their business ventures outside of sports.
- Use licensing agreements: In the case that an athlete does not have the capital



- to support the protection of their IP, they should examine the possibility of licensing out their IPRs. Nevertheless, much attention needs to be paid to the agreement's contractual details.
- Monitor your IPRs and enforce their protection: This is especially true for social media and e-commerce platforms. However, attention needs to be paid to the intensity, with which the protection is enforced, as it can lead to negative results (e.g. Giannis Antetokounmpo's backlash from fans).
- Include IP provisions in contracts: This is relevant to all contracts, including those with an athlete's team, sponsors, or business partners, as IP provisions specify who owns and manages any jointly created IP (Lance Armstrong's Livestrong brand).
- Maintain a consistent brand: An athlete's branding needs to remain consistent for the public to associate it with them. A branding style guide could help with this effort.
- Stay informed on industry trends: The evolution of technology leads to new forms of IP being created. Athletes need to be aware of these changes and adapt their IP strategies accordingly (e.g. Serena Williams).
- Build a strong support system: This includes legal, marketing, and business professionals, along with people, who genuinely show interest in the athlete and the person, as they can help them navigate the publicity-privacy scope.
- Innovate: Innovation is a vital concept for any athlete to grasp. It is the driving force of the economy and development, as a whole. It is multi-faceted as it includes invention, product and service improvements, as well as the introduction of new methods of production, delivery, and distribution. In other words, it is a new way of thinking regarding product marketing and development. Understanding and utilising innovation is important for athletes, because it promotes new sources of income for the athlete, which, in turn, ensures their financial safety post-retirement, and it allows them to leave an impact in their sport by improving the professional experiences of those that come after them (e.g. data-driven talent scouting, sports analytics, etc.).



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