

Sobel, Lionel S. *Professional Sports and the Law*. New York: Law-Acts Publishers Inc., 1977. Pp. xxviii, 839. Notes, subject index, bibliography, appendices. \$45.00.

Lately, many sports journalists have noted tongue-in-cheek that “Fans not only need to know the difference between a T- and I-formation, but also between a temporary restraining order and a permanent injunction!” In light of many, recent, court decisions and other legal developments, this has become increasingly true.

An area of law heretofore not familiar to most is now the topic of public headlines. One need only open the daily papers to be bombarded with news of contract negotiations, salary disputes, option clauses, league mergers, and other legal topics. In today’s society, one might have expected that sports would not be shielded from overlapping legal issues. However, it is unlikely that *anyone* could have anticipated such an intrusion. It has become apparent that everyone with any connection with professional sports must have more than a cursory knowledge of the law and its effects on the field.

This is the chief purpose of Lionel S. Sobel’s *Professional Sports and the Law*. It is a single source to which one can refer as a “starting point” for any research into the subject. Professor Sobel is highly qualified to have written the book. He teaches Professional Sports Law at the University of Southern California School of Law. He has also lectured on the topic for the Practising Law Institute. Currently, he is a practising attorney in Beverly Hills and serves as counsel to collegiate athletic directors and athletic conferences as well as clients involved in professional sports.

Unlike the traditional law school “casebook,” Sobel’s text is a highly-readable account of the history and trend of legal issues that are of current interest. Sobel’s discussion of baseball’s special exemption from the antitrust laws (the *only* sport accorded such treatment) sets the stage of the book. What is often a confusing and ambiguous line of reasoning is explained in historical perspective. Detailed accounts of each significant event make the whole subject more easily understood. Sobel follows this pattern of chronological development and explanation throughout the book.

The book’s major coverage focuses upon the antitrust aspects of professional sports, reserve and option clauses. The text is supplemented by very good appendices of relevant statutes and sample professional contracts. Player drafts, labor laws, league “wars” and mergers, tax aspects, and broadcasting are also discussed. The emphasis is on the intervention of government into the business of sports through the courts, National Labor Relations Board, Internal Revenue Service and other agencies.

Each subject area is treated at such length as to give even the novice a more clear and simple understanding of the law. Chapters are structured to provide a detailed explanation of each topic. The practising attorney or consultant will find it as useful as the professor or student. As Howard Cosell, an attorney and sports announcer, states in the introduction: “The relevant theme here is that it is no longer possible to communicate accurately in sports without having some knowledge of the law and how sports increasingly relates to it . . . . in lucid, simple terms what the law is all about.”

Since action in the courtroom has become almost as important as action on the playing field, this book is a necessary tool for anyone in this area.

University of Louisville

George E. Berry