

# Daily Journal

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## Christopher S. Yates

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**C**hristopher S. Yates, a partner at Latham & Watkins LLP, is a prominent figure in high-stakes litigation, particularly in the realms of antitrust, sports and entertainment law.

One of his major accomplishments in 2022 was his defense of World Aquatics

(formerly known as Fédération Internationale de Natation, FINA) in two high-profile antitrust lawsuits.

These suits were brought by the International Swimming League (ISL) and a class of elite swimmers, alleging that World Aquatics leveraged its position as the global governing body for aquatic sports to prevent the creation of a professional swimming league. Yates' strategic legal approach led to the California federal court ruling in favor of World Aquatics, determining that the organization's governing rules and conduct did not unreasonably restrain trade.

The World Aquatics case was particularly significant due to its novel nature and potential impact on sports federations globally. It raised critical questions about the application of U.S. antitrust laws to the governing rules and structure of an international sports federation. The case was a landmark in U.S. courts for dealing with challenges to the rules and governance of international sports federations on the merits.

"The judgment correctly preserves the ability of sports governing bodies to maintain and enforce rules and regulations necessary to administer and promote their respective sports," Yates said.

He faced several challenges during the World Aquatics case, including a

jurisdictional battle and issues related to internal communications within World Aquatics. Despite these setbacks, his effective advocacy and legal acumen led to a favorable outcome for his client.

Yates is also attentive to emerging trends in antitrust law, saying the early impact of AI in antitrust is already here, with a number of putative class actions filed with AI-driven algorithmic pricing software at their heart.

"I'm proud that Latham saw this coming and the firm organized into teams of creative and strategic professionals who are embedded in these issues so deeply they regularly see around corners for clients," Yates said. "When you consider how quickly AI is being adopted by virtually every industry and that there has been limited real-world opportunities to kick the proverbial tires as companies integrate these programs into their business and services, the potential domino effect of the plaintiff's bar slap-dashing complaints together in order to catch the wave — it's staggering. It's vital companies take a hard look at their potential exposure and be nimble when it comes to making adjustments to their AI protocols and programs."

Yates also previously served as Global Co-Chair of Latham's Antitrust & Competition Practice.