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Top 100 Lawyers AND DISTINGUISHED COUNSEL



CHRIS YATES

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Chris Yates stood before a 10-person jury in the Eastern District of New York in January 2025, delivering opening and closing arguments in a trial pitting U.S. Soccer against the North American Soccer League. NASL, which filed the case in 2017, had sought more than a billion dollars in damages after trebling and claimed U.S. Soccer conspired with co-defendant Major League Soccer to monopolize professional soccer in the United States. Working with partner Larry Buterman, Yates defended U.S. Soccer through three weeks of testimony. *NASL*

v. U.S. Soccer Federation Inc., 1:17-cv-05495 (E.D.N. Y., filed Sept. 19, 2017).

The jury took 90 minutes to reach a verdict for the defense, which Yates then preserved by defeating NASL's motion for a new trial and its appeal to the Second Circuit.

The case carried facts spanning decades and a discovery record built since 2017. Yates and his team mined that record for inconsistencies between NASL's litigation positions and the statements NASL made at the time, then challenged the credibility of plaintiff witnesses. When NASL rested its case, Yates chose not to call any live witnesses. Instead, his team played two hours of deposition video and rested. "Fortunately, our read of the jury was correct, and it only took the jury 90 minutes to return a unanimous verdict in favor of U.S. Soccer and MLS," Yates said.

In January 2026, Yates led the team representing World Aquatics against the International Swimming League, which sought \$120 million after damages were trebled following eight years of litigation. ISL alleged that World Aquatics used its position as the governing body for Olympic and aquatic sports to block a swimming league from forming. Yates had won summary judgment for World

Aquatics in January 2023, but the Ninth Circuit reversed that ruling and sent the case to trial, leaving the jury to decide whether the per se test for antitrust liability applied. *ISL v. World Aquatics*, 3:18-cv-07393 (N.D. Cal., filed Dec. 7, 2018).

"Every examination was structured to demonstrate to the jury that ISL was mismanaged and that its failure was the result of its mismanagement and poor choices, not anything World Aquatics did," Yates said. The jury deliberated a day and a half and awarded ISL \$1.

Yates is currently leading the Latham team representing TKO Group, the UFC's parent company, against lawsuits from mixed martial artists alleging the organization suppressed fighter pay. He also represents the Atlantic Coast Conference on antitrust issues facing college sports.

Early in his career, Yates worked alongside multiple mentors on a trial that shaped how he approaches the courtroom. Each mentor tried cases differently, which taught him there is no one way to do it. "I realized that I needed to embrace my own style, because being yourself is critical to success in the courtroom," Yates said. That mix of collaboration and competition drew him toward antitrust litigation, where trials test a lawyer's ability to simplify concepts for a jury or judge.