

Rising Star: Latham's Aaron Chiu

By **David Steele**

Law360 (August 4, 2025, 4:00 PM EDT) -- Aaron Chiu of Latham & Watkins LLP was on the legal team representing U.S. Soccer in its February antitrust jury verdict victory over an upstart pro league, and on the team representing the Atlantic Coast Conference in its \$2.78 billion name, image and likeness settlement between the NCAA, the major conferences and college athletes, earning him a spot among the sports and betting law practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

The biggest cases of his career:

Chiu could not choose just one out of the many impactful cases he has worked on — not unusual among successful attorneys. In his case, though, he has been engaged in several that have genuinely shifted the landscape of sports law.

Besides his role on the Latham team representing the ACC in the landmark NIL settlement that was approved in June, he represents the conference in several other class actions by current or former athletes looking to capitalize on the change in compensation rules, as well as Ultimate Fighting Championship parent company TKO Group in a class action by MMA fighters that led to a \$375 million settlement. Plus, he and his Latham colleagues represent swimming's international governing body in an ongoing dispute in federal court with swimmers looking to form a professional league.

"I think it's really kind of the constellation of the work that I've done on these matters," Chiu said, adding that he has enjoyed "being able to have a front seat" to cases of that magnitude.

"For me, the fun part has been all of these matters being kind of unique and marquee in their own right," he said. "Seeing all these different issues and being at the forefront of them all has been really fun."

2025

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Aaron Chiu
Latham & Watkins

Age: 37

Home base: San Francisco

Position: Partner

Law school: University of Southern California's Gould School of Law

First job after law school: Clerk for Judge Johnnie B. Rawlinson of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

His proudest moment as an attorney:

Picking the case that meant the most personally to Chiu was fairly easy, and it related to his enjoyment of and proficiency at trial litigation. It was Latham's representation of U.S. Soccer and Major League Soccer in the North American Soccer League's \$500 million antitrust suit accusing the top tiers of the sport in the U.S. of conspiring to sabotage its attempt to establish a new pro league. A New York federal jury found in favor of U.S. Soccer in February, and an NASL bid for a new trial was rejected in May.

"In cases like this, the clients are putting an immense amount of trust in us," Chiu said, "so in a case where you're facing that sort of magnitude of potential exposure, there's always going to be the question of, 'Was it the right call to take this to trial, and to trust the Latham team to do it?' So being able to deliver that sort of result, when your client has made that determination and placed their trust in you to really deliver, was really gratifying."

In the grand scheme of sports legal events this year, the U.S. Soccer case paled in comparison to the total restructuring of college sports brought on by the NIL settlement, but, Chiu said, wins at trial pack a punch for attorneys that settlement don't totally match.

"Can't deny it, it's obviously a little sweeter to get one in a trial setting," he said. "That's the core of what we do — as litigators, we love to be in the ring and duking it out, and to have that sort of vindication, it's hard to beat."

What motivates him:

Chiu has witnessed not only the groundbreaking results of the cases he's been involved in, but also the process of reaching those results, largely through the role of antitrust law in bringing about change in sports nationally and internationally. His strength in antitrust issues has taken him places he had not anticipated, and it increased his hunger to see what comes next.

"We have this big watershed moment, where we have the settlement and we're now ushering in a new era of college athletics," Chiu said, speaking of the NIL deal. "The fun aspect of that for me, that keeps me going, is being able to learn and be exposed to new things every day."

"If you told me two years ago that I would be working on 'What is college sports going to look like after this settlement,' I wouldn't believe it," Chiu added. "All these new issues and being able to solve hard problems — that's what keeps me going. There's always something new, and there's stuff that is changing so fast, and is also in the public zeitgeist. People care about this. People have views. Just being able to have a front seat to that is pretty fun."

His other motivation, Chiu said, is working with colleagues with such knowledge and expertise, above, below and next to him. "As much as this is a recognition of my work," he said of his Rising Stars honor, "I think it shouldn't be forgotten that a lot of that is built on the shoulders of others, associates side-by-side with some fantastic mentors and teammates here at Latham."

Why he became a sports attorney:

Chiu said he was in the right place at the right time very early on at Latham, among the industry leaders in antitrust practice.

"From Day 1 when I started here, I was working on antitrust cases and was very lucky to have been

involved in cases that so happened to track a lot of the evolution of the law," he said. "And as antitrust has become more and more in the front-page news across a variety of industries, what we've seen evolve has been the continued use of antitrust in the sports realm — with the focus on athletes and the interplay between athletes and leagues and owners and franchises and federations."

Chiu did not start out wanting to be in sports, but even as he remains involved in cases with Apple, Google and other nonsports entities, he said he keeps getting drawn into sports. "In some ways, it was serendipity."

Sports law, he said, is "a fun area where you can apply antitrust, but it's also an area where a lot of people love sports, where they're really interested. Everyone has an opinion and everyone's really invested — it's a really cool dimension. We're applying antitrust concepts to things that some view as mundane or merely economic, but now, you're applying it to this realm where there's this human element of competition and so many other dynamics that come into play."

How he sees the industry changing in the next 10 years:

The upheaval in sports at every level and with every person and institution involved, Chiu said, will mean that sports law will become "more interdisciplinary."

"We're starting to see with these new models that are coming in, in terms of player compensation, and the way leagues and teams and franchises are thinking about the interaction with players and athletes, there's actually going to be a lot of room for innovation and further rethinking of the classic model," he said. "We're seeing new forms of investment, rethinking the traditional model of sports ownership and media rights and things like that. Just from a legal perspective, that's going to generate new opportunities, and also new problems that we haven't really thought about."

Just as antitrust became an unexpected factor across the sports realm, Chiu added, because of the drastic changes ongoing, "we're going to see new areas [of law] that pop up."

--As told to David Steele. Editing by Linda Voorhis.

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2025 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,100 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2025, to be eligible for this year's award.