

The Award Criteria

- Candidate may be a lawyer or non-lawyer and must have at least five years experience in sports law or a sports field in general. Candidate does not have to be currently active in the sports industry. Award can be made posthumously.
- Candidate exhibits “service-above-self” attitude. This would have been demonstrated by a record of community involvement, public service, or other engagements that clearly have had a positive, motivating effect on others.
- Candidate must be regarded as a person with high integrity and ethics and possess the qualities held in highest regard by those in the field of sports law.
- Candidate must have a consistent record of presenting the practice and/or theory of sports law in a positive light to the sports world and the public in general.

Nomination Process

- Nominations are accepted from active members of the Sports Lawyers Association and members of the Selection Committee.

Selection Committee

- The Selection Committee is, at a minimum, composed of three representatives of the association. At the discretion of SLA’s president, the Selection Committee can be expanded to include not more than seven members, and one member of the committee serves as chairperson.

Presentation of the Award

- The Award of Excellence is presented during the Sports Lawyers Association annual conference.

Public Relations

- The Sports Lawyers Association engages in focusing attention on the award through its contacts with the sports media and sports broadcast industry.



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Sports Lawyers Association

Award of Excellence



Donna Lopiano,
B.S., M.A., Ph.D



2008 Recipient: Donna Lopiano, B.S., M.A., Ph.D

DONNA A. LOPIANO, B.S., M.A., Ph.D

Dr. Donna Lopiano is the President and founder of Sports Management Resources (SMR). SMR is a consulting firm that focuses on bringing the knowledge of experienced, expert former athletics directors to assist scholastic and collegiate athletics departments in solving growth and development challenges.

Dr. Lopiano is the former Chief Executive Officer of the Women's Sports Foundation (1992-2007) and was named one of "The 10 Most Powerful Women in Sports" by Fox Sports. The Sporting News has also listed her as one of "The 100 Most Influential People in Sports." She has been nationally and internationally recognized for her leadership advocating for gender equity in sports by the International Olympic Committee, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the National Association for Girls and Women in Sports, the National Association of Collegiate Women Athletic Administrators and the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics.

Dr. Lopiano also served for 18 years as the University of Texas at Austin Director of Women's Athletics and is a past-president of the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women. During her tenure at Texas, she

constructed what many believed to be the premiere women's athletics program in the country; twice earning the top program in the nation award. All eight UT sports were consistently ranked in the nation's top ten in Division I where they earned eighteen national championships in six different sports, produced 51 individual sport national champion athletes, 57 Southwest Conference championships and 395 All-American athletes, dozens among them Olympians and world champions. Ninety percent of women athletes who exhausted their athletic eligibility at the University of Texas received a baccalaureate degree. Prior to Texas, Lopiano served as an Assistant Professor and Assistant Athletic Director at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York.

Recognized as one of the foremost national experts on gender equity in sport, Dr. Lopiano has testified about Title IX and gender equity before three Congressional committees, served as a consultant to the U.S. Office for Civil Rights Department of Health, Education and Welfare Title IX Task Force and as an expert witness in twenty-eight court cases. Dr. Lopiano has also served as a consultant to school districts, institutions of higher education and state education agencies on Title IX compliance and to non-profit organizations on governance and strategic planning.

She received her bachelor's degree from Southern Connecticut State University, her master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Southern California and is the recipient of five honorary doctoral degrees. She has been a college coach of men's and women's volleyball, women's basketball and softball and coached the Italian national women's softball team.

As an athlete, she participated in 26 national championships in four sports and was a nine-time All-American at four different positions in softball, a sport in which she played on six national championship teams. She is a member of the National Sports Hall of Fame, the National Softball Hall of Fame and the Connecticut and Texas Women's Halls of Fame, among others.

Previous Award Recipients

- 1991 Alan I. Rothenberg**
- 1992 Anita L. DeFrantz**
- 1993 Lloyd E. Shefsky & John F. Wendel**
- 1994 Gary Bettman & Jay Moyer**
- 1997 Reuven J. Katz**
- 2000 Stanley H. Kasten**
- 2004 Marvin J. Miller**
- 2005 Paul J. Tagliabue**
- 2007 Alan H. (Bud) Selig**