



PRACTICE SESSION

### Have Immigration Attorney, Will Travel

Dana Imperia helps sports stars get in the game



Dana Imperia  
Green and Spiegl  
Immigration  
Philadelphia

Though Dana Imperia admits she's not much of a sports fan—outside of marathon after-school Madden NFL sessions in the '90s—the Philadelphia attorney is one of the region's go-to experts in sports immigration, representing major league sports teams, esports gamers and elite athletes.

"I always tell people we're sort of glorified travel agents," Imperia says. "We're helping people relocate."

Imperia coordinates with federal agencies to ensure clients qualify for specific visa classifications, and with U.S. embassies or consulates for immigration interviews and visa-stamping processes. "We're helping people achieve their dreams by being able to come here and get the job that they've been working their whole life for," she says.

Immigration law is a good fit for Imperia's work style: methodical, strategic, and with a penchant for thinking 10 steps ahead. A case can quickly become stressful when a frightened foreign national wants answers yesterday.

"If one minor thing goes wrong in their process," Imperia says, "they might have to relocate an entire family. They're violating federal U.S. laws. I think that is also what makes me better-suited for this job: those high-pressure situations. Nobody wants a frazzled lawyer."

The consequences of a lesser immigration attorney's work could be dire to a sports fan, too. Imagine if your favorite team made a key trade acquisition for a championship push—only for it to disintegrate on a technicality. "Teams are making all these trade agreements on the basis that this person's going to be able to come to the United States no matter what," Imperia says. "And when immigration gets in the way [of that], it's really bad."

One client, an NBA player, had to miss games so that he could go to Mexico for a visa stamp, the result of his visa

activating. "That interrupted their whole training schedule and their strategy as a team," she says. "So it's hyper-stressful."

She also represents a growing number of professional esports gamers who travel the world to compete in high-octane competitions and tournaments.

In 2013, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services caved to mounting public pressure and declared esports gamers eligible for P-1 visas, the same distinction given to athletes. "People are like, 'Esports, are you kidding me?'" Imperia says. But popularity in esports has grown exponentially in viewership and revenue—Business Insider reported in January 2021 that the esports market is on track to surpass \$1.5 billion by 2023.

Part of Imperia's challenge is building up an esports athlete's repertoire to demonstrate they've attained a certain level of renown or merit. That could mean tabulating their Twitch stream followers or their ranking on Overwatch.

"I definitely sit down and study the games, just to know what I'm talking about when I'm working on these cases," she says. "But they're all so complex. I want to play through a full video game, but it would just require too much commitment for me. It's so much more complicated than Madden." —MATT AMIS

### Who Ya Got?

Will Philadelphia forgive a young Imperia, who opted for Tampa Bay in her Madden days? "I primarily played with the Buccaneers to ensure I would win," she says. "The era of Keyshawn Johnson and Warren Sapp."



ATTORNEYS SELECTED TO SUPER LAWYERS AND RISING STARS WERE CHOSEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROCESS ON PAGE 36.

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CONTENTS

EXHIBITS

PERSONAL ACCOUNT

GAME CHANGERS

COURTROOM ARTIST

RISING STARS

SIDEBAR

SUMMATION

PRACTICE SESSION

COVER STORY

ORAL HISTORY

THE ANNUAL LIST

36 SELECTION PROCESS

38 THE TOP LISTS

43 LISTED BY AREA OF PRACTICE