

Special Report

# Global Sports: Private Equity's New Playground

---



# Executive Summary: Private Equity’s Expanding Role in Global Sports, Media & Entertainment

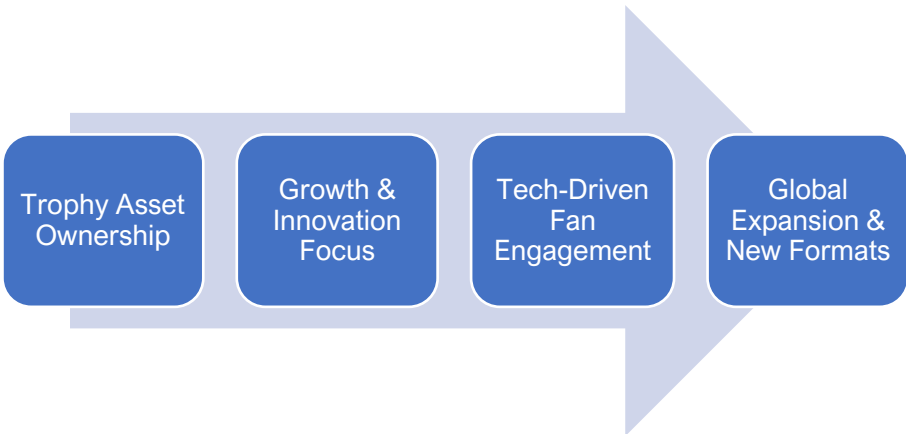
## Market Context & Summary:

- Sports franchises and related businesses remain attractive assets worldwide, with valuations, media rights, and commercial partnerships reaching record highs.
- The limited number of established teams and leagues creates powerful scarcity value, increasing competition among investors and supporting rapid increases in franchise valuations—especially in mature markets where expansion is rare.
- Where ownership was once dominated by wealthy individuals, private equity is now reshaping the field as leagues open to institutional capital. The focus has shifted from “trophy assets” to scalable growth platforms.
- PE activity spans far beyond team stakes, into media rights, sports tech, real estate, and new entertainment formats. Media rights continue to fuel exponential growth through ever-larger broadcast and streaming deals.
- Emerging areas like esports and women’s professional sports are also gaining traction, supported by rising fan engagement and commercial investment. Together, these trends show PE’s growing role in transforming sports into a diversified, global investment ecosystem.

## Key Metrics:

Metrics	Value
Global Sports Market Size	Over 500 Bn (2024 value), projected \$850+ Bn by 2034
PE Sports & Media Deal Activity	~\$31.6 Bn in 2024 sports services deals
Sports Tech PE Investment	~\$5.7 Bn YTD 2025, +53% YoY growth
Major Media Rights Deal	NBA’s 11-year media rights deal at \$77 Bn (2024)

## Evolution of Private Equity in Sports & Entertainment:



Source: S&P Global, Capstone Partners, NBA,, Aranca Research

# PE Investment Landscape in Sports, Media & Entertainment

## Significant PE Investors in Sports

Investor	Active Investments in Sports	Total AUM (\$ Bn)	Primary Investor Type	HQ Location
Arctos Sports Partners	25	\$9.8	Other private equity	US
Ares Management	16	\$545.9	Asset manager	US
CVC Capital Partners	12	\$216.6	Asset manager	Luxembourg
Silver Lake	10	\$103.0	PE/buyout	US
RedBird Capital Partners	10	\$12.0	PE/buyout	US

Source: PitchBook, Geography: Global. Data as of March 31, 2025

## Key Private Equity Players Driving Sports Investment Growth

- Leading firms such as Ares Management, Arctos Sports Partners, and CVC Capital Partners are at the forefront of sports investments. These funds deploy substantial capital across the sports, media, and entertainment sectors.
- They use strategies such as equity, growth equity, and mezzanine debt, to build flexible investments. Their focus goes beyond teams, targeting emerging media platforms, sports technology, and related assets.
- These moves highlight the growing confidence in sports as a scalable asset class with strong, fan-driven value.

## Emerging Sports-Focused PE Firms & Trends

- TPG Sports launched in May 2025 with backing from Symphony Ventures and Lunate, targeting teams, leagues, and sports tech.
- Velocity Capital expanded its sports and media portfolio in 2025 with a \$100 million investment in Unique Sports Group, a leading European football agency.
- Sixth Street is scaling sports with its Bay Collective women’s football model, while Bluestone focuses on investments in venue tech, recreational sports, and entertainment infrastructure.
- Former athletes and owners are increasingly launching funds, combining insider expertise with capital deployment.

Source: PitchBook, Deloitte, Forbes, Aranca Research

# Private Equity Footprint in North American Sports and European Football

Yearly Number of PE Deals in North American Sports (NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL, and MLS)

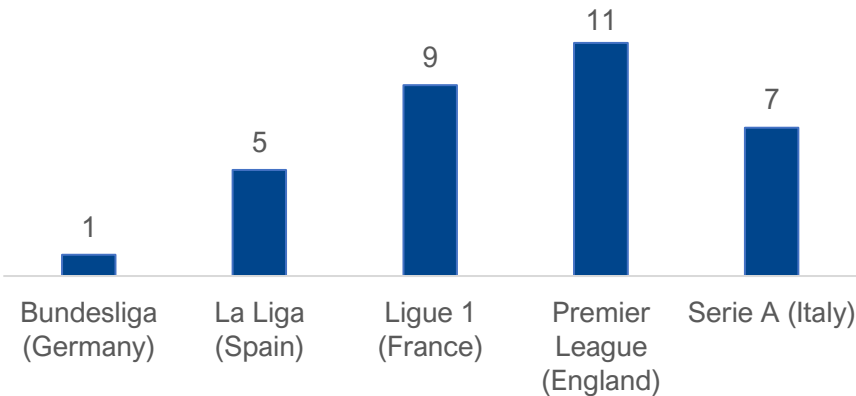


Source: PitchBook, Geography: North America. Data as of May 20, 2025

## Growth of Private Equity in North American Sports

- Since 2020, the major North American leagues (NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL, and MLS) have eased ownership restrictions, allowing private equity firms to acquire minority stakes and fueling increased deal activity.
- The NFL’s 2023-24 approval permitting up to 10% passive PE ownership marked a notable shift, complementing the NBA and MLB’s long-term acceptance which has increased institutional participation.
- Over 74 North American sports teams are now backed or affiliated with private equity, with many more viewing PE as a strategic growth partner amid rising team valuations and evolving monetization models.

Private Equity Activity Across Europe's Top Football Leagues



Source: PitchBook, company filings. Geography: Europe. Data as of 31 July 2025

## Private Equity’s Key Investments Shaping European Football

- Private equity involvement has markedly increased across the “Big Five” European football leagues, with over 36 clubs now holding PE, VC, or private debt stakes.
- Driven by soaring league revenues surpassing \$23.7 Bn in the 2023-24 season and a 750% growth since the Premier League’s inception, PE investments have become a major capital source for club development and expansion.
- RedBird’s milestone \$1.3 Bn acquisition of AC Milan in 2022 and Ares’ 2025 talks with Apollo on Atlético Madrid reflect private equity’s growing influence in European football.

Source: PitchBook, Deloitte, Forbes, Aranca Research

## Investment Drivers & Emerging Trends in Sports



### Digital & Creator-Driven Growth

New sports formats led by digital creators who have built-in audiences, accelerate growth and reduce the risk of fan acquisition. Emerging leagues like Baller League leverage streaming and social media for rapid scalability.



### Women's and Youth Sports Expansion

Women's sports revenues are projected to reach \$2.35 Bn in 2025 with growing media rights and sponsorships. Youth sports investments focus on tech-enabled participation and memorable experiences in team-based activities, fueling future fanbases.



### Stable Media Rights Revenue

Multi-year media deals provide stable, lease-like incomes, boosting franchise valuations. Leagues now spread rights across TV, streaming, and digital to expand their reach. Large fan data strengthens negotiations and enables targeted advertising.



### Institutionalization of Sports Investing

Sports assets now combine real estate-like stability, infrastructure characteristics, and growth potential. This allows private equity, venture capital, family offices, and celebrity investors to deploy strategic capital across teams, leagues, and tech ecosystems.



### Commercial Growth Through Betting & Sponsorships

Legalized sports betting is unlocking major revenue streams, drawing PE investment as leagues integrate sportsbooks and betting content. Commercialization is accelerating through jersey sponsorships, in-stadium activations, and branded media tie-ins.

Understanding  
the forces  
shaping today's  
sports  
investment  
landscape

Source: PitchBook, Deloitte, Forbes, Aranca Research

## Risks and Uncertainties

### Valuation Sustainability

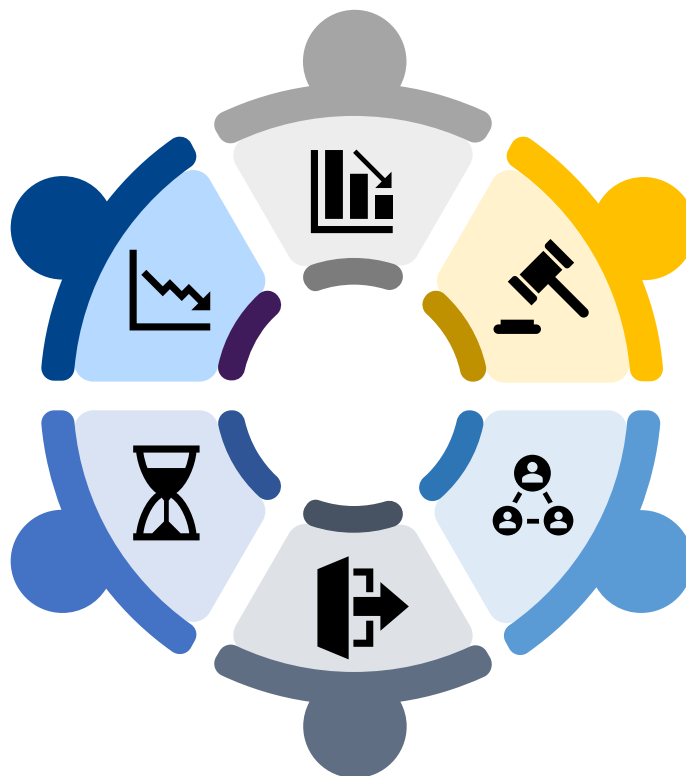
Sports valuations have seen rapid growth, but there is debate on whether this upward trajectory will continue indefinitely. While some investors point to supply scarcity and revenue growth as supporting factors, others warn of potential overvaluation and market bubbles fueled by excess capital.

### Long Holding Periods

Investments in sports teams often require longer holding periods compared to typical private equity funds, sometimes exceeding 10 years. This mismatched timeline complicates exit strategies and demands patient capital aligned with the sector's growth cycle.

### Exit Uncertainties

Exiting a sports investment is challenging due to shared ownership rules, league approvals, and limited secondary markets. These structural factors can delay or limit a PE firm's ability to realize returns, adding risk to the investment.



### Revenue Volatility

Heavy reliance on media rights and fan engagement makes revenue streams vulnerable to market shifts and changes in consumer behavior. Technological disruptions and evolving preferences require adaptable strategies to mitigate these risks.

### Regulatory and Operational Risks

League governance, contractual complexities, and stakeholder negotiations create an unpredictable operating environment. These factors can disrupt team operations, influence revenue stability, and introduce execution risk, potentially impacting investor returns.

### Commercialization and Fan Sentiment Risks

Increased private equity involvement may increase ticket prices and intensify commercialization, risking fan alienation. This can lead to reputational damage and challenges in maintaining grassroots support, which are critical for long-term sustainability.

Source: PitchBook, Deloitte, Forbes, Aranca Research

## Conclusion & Outlook: PE's Growing Role in Sports



### Impact Today: Growth & Expansion

- Private equity is driving record valuations and deal activity as major leagues welcome institutional investors.
- Investments now extend far beyond team ownership, targeting media rights, sports technology, real estate, and infrastructure to capture scalable growth opportunities.



### Broader Legacy: Cultural & Community Value

- Institutional capital is reshaping the identity of leagues and teams, driving the evolution of global sports as a business.
- Strategic commitments to grassroots programs, women's leagues, and inclusive initiatives are strengthening local communities and broadening global participation.



### Outlook: Innovation & New Formats

- Growth will continue through emerging sports, athlete-driven investment models, and multi-team ownership structures that reflect a diversified approach.
- The challenge lies in balancing profitability with fan loyalty, while safeguarding sporting traditions that make it culturally unique.

Source: PitchBook, Deloitte, Forbes, Aranca Research





**2500+**

Global Clients

**500+**

Strong professional team across  
multi-disciplinary domains

**120+**

Sectors and sub-sectors  
researched by our analysis

**80+**

Countries where we have  
delivered projects

## ABOUT ARANCA



### Growth Advisory & Procurement

CXOs in Strategy, SBUs, Sales, Marketing, CI/MI, Innovation



### Technology | IP Research & Advisory

R&D, Tech Scouting, Open Innovation, IP Teams, Product Development



### Valuation & Financial Advisory

CFOs in Start-ups, PE/VC Firms, Corporate M&A Teams, Mid-market Companies



### Investment Research & Analytics

Brokerage, Hedge Funds, IRPs, I-Banks, AMCs, Investor Relations

**For more details:** [www.aranca.com](http://www.aranca.com) | <https://www.linkedin.com/company/aranca> | <https://www.aranca.com/knowledge-library>



# Connect with our Team



**Shantanu Behere**

Analyst,  
Investment Research

+91 223937 9999  
shantanu.behere@aranca.com



**Manan Kumar**

Manager,  
Investment Research

+91 124668 9999  
manan.kumar@aranca.com



**Akash Khairnar**

Associate Vice President,  
Investment Research

+91 223937 9999  
akash.khairnar@aranca.com



**Avinash Singh**

Head,  
Investment Research

+91 124668 9999 (ext. 951)  
avinashg.singh@aranca.com

**For more details:** [www.aranca.com](http://www.aranca.com) | <https://www.linkedin.com/company/aranca> | <https://www.aranca.com/knowledge-library>

# Decide Fearlessly

From startups to the Fortune 500, private equity and global financial firms, Aranca is the trusted research and advisory partner for over 2500 companies

[www.aranca.com](http://www.aranca.com)



This material is exclusive property of Aranca. No part of this presentation may be used, shared, modified and/or disseminated without permission.  
All rights reserved.