

Law's pro football negotiations score on skills-building

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At the Tulane Professional Football Negotiation Competition, University of Mississippi law students Alexia Boggs (at left, facing camera) and Clayton Adams make their winning pitch to the Chapman University team of Ashley Daniel and Jeff Farano. (Photo by Linda P. Campbell)

For 40 furious minutes, the scrambling and counter-moves around Denver Broncos outside linebacker Von Miller sounded like a bona fide big-league, front-office skirmish: “Face of the franchise ... but what about the substance-abuse issues? ... we want a \$20 million signing bonus ... but we can’t go above \$114 million for the total contract.”

As the clock ran out, the teams of law students from the University of Mississippi and Chapman University hashed out a six-year deal worth \$114 million with a \$14 million bonus. But the skills displayed by the pair from Ole Miss gave them the win in the [Tulane Professional Football Negotiation Competition](#), held Jan. 29–30 at Tulane Law School.

The audience of law students then got a lesson in pro football contract strategizing from a trio of industry insiders who served as judges for the finals: Tulane law graduate Nick Sabella, football administration assistant with the Chicago Bears; Trip MacCracken, Kansas City Chiefs vice president of football administration; and Jason Fitzgerald, founder of data-crunching website OverTheCap.com.

In its first year open to outside law schools, the competition, run by the [Tulane Sports Law Society](#), drew teams from 16 other universities. Tulane fielded three teams, one of which was edged out for a spot in the finals. Industry pros judging the multiple rounds included Tulane law alumnus and sports agent Martin Fischman, founder of Fischman & Wiltz Sports in New Orleans.

“It exceeded my expectations,” said Sabella, a former Sports Law Society president who now assists managing the Bears’ salary cap and negotiating player contracts. “You could tell the groups put a lot of work into it, and I can’t wait to see how the competition grows in future years.”

A football sibling to the [Tulane National Baseball Arbitration Competition](#), the [event](#) adds skills-training and networking components to the law school’s expanding connections within the NFL.

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