

How to handle disputes in Professional Sports^{1, 2}

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays sports took a very important part in our life. Every day we are confront of sports and sport is more and more mediatized. During the 20th century ADR was brought into sports field, but it is still not known by all the actors of this world. It gave us more choice to resolve disputes in sports area. But, with the lack of understanding it can be difficult to choose the best one. I will use the method of Multi-attribute Decision Making (MADA), to found out that prevention is the more suitable resolution to sports disputes.

Keywords: Contracts, payment, free-time, athletes, sponsoring, sports club, prevention, control, influence, social media.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays sports could be considered as a real industry, but why? In the United States already Sports is a money machine. For example, “the National Football Association earned in 2015 13 billion dollars.”³ This phenomenon went overseas in Europe with football. Another example “leads us to the new negotiation around television transmission right of the English Premier League which was earned for 7 billion euros.”⁴ More recently the French “Ligue 1” sell her transmission right to a Spanish company for 1 billion euros. Sports clubs are running like companies and the players as investments. It is a bet. Some clubs are in the stock exchange and they are very volatile in case of failure or big scandal. These huge amounts of money allow the clubs to pay more their players and also bring to the sport planet many problems which are black

¹ Editor’s note: Student papers are authored by graduate or undergraduate students based on coursework at accredited universities or training programs. This paper was prepared for the course “International Contract Management” facilitated by Dr Paul D. Giammalvo of PT Mitratata Citragraha, Jakarta, Indonesia as an Adjunct Professor under contract to SKEMA Business School for the program Master of Science in Project and Programme Management and Business Development. <http://www.skema.edu/programmes/masters-of-science>. For more information on this global program (Lille and Paris in France; Belo Horizonte in Brazil), contact Dr Paul Gardiner, Global Programme Director, at paul.gardiner@skema.edu.

² How to cite this paper: Bouquerel, L. (2019). How to handle disputes in Professional Sports, *PM World Journal*, Vol. VIII, Issue III (April).

³ NORMANDIN, F. (2018, March 6). *La NFL, un modèle d'affaires gagnant ? Les revenus (1) - Échec et Strat.* Retrieved from <https://echecetstrat.com/2018/02/06/la-nfl-un-modele-daffaires-gagnant-les-revenus-1/>

⁴ BUXEDA, Y. (2015, February 11). Droits TV : un pactole de 6,9 milliards d’euros pour la Premier League - France 24. Retrieved from <https://www.france24.com/fr/20150211-droits-tv-football-premier-league-angleterre-7-milliards-euros-pl-manchester-liverpool>

hole and for what we do not have any black and white written solution. Contracts are here to help and to avoid this kind of problems. Let's go deeper to this problem.

With these quantities of money available in sport an athlete is more than just a player. Also, with the new technology a player is real person of influence around the world. For example, "Cristiano RONALDO has 144 million followers in Instagram."⁵ We can also talk about the "scandal of Serge AURIER in periscope in 2016, which lead to a huge problem for his club Paris Saint Germain in the management of his case because of contracts failure. Sports club has to protect themselves from any derives on the new technology and this could be a problem in contracts. The sports club are faced to many problems nowadays and contract could be a solution to theses, but is it possible to create a perfect contract to handle all the disputes possible?

The disputes between a sports club and an athlete could take three major forms. The first one is the commercial disputes. Sometimes the players have other contracts with other brands, which are different from the brand in contracts with their employers. The second one is directly between the sports club and the athlete. It could be a basket-ball franchise which refuses to make a player available for national teams' competition. And, the last one is a suspension of license or a bankrupt like we can see sometimes in football. These three issues in the sport planet are very frequent and sometimes go into court or just to huge issues between players and sports clubs with million dollars in stake.

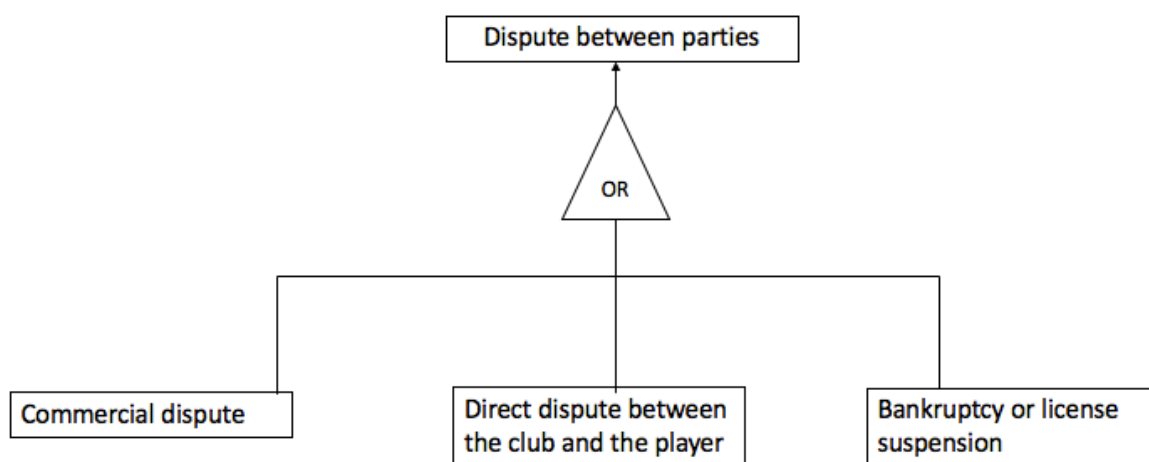


FIGURE 1 Fault Tree Diagram⁶

Money, influence and all the failure in contracts give us example all over the years about some disputes which could be avoided by redacting clear and simple contract. But contracts are they the

⁵ INSTAGRAM. (2018). Cristiano Ronaldo (@cristiano)? Instagram photos and videos. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/cristiano/>

⁶ HA WATSON

only solution? Nowadays when a sport club hire a person he makes a bet. The club wants to maximise his investment sportively and now in their store with jersey and all derived products. It is a risk aversion. A dispute could affect this strategy like the scandal around Cristiano RONALDO in October 2018 which led to a loss of 5% in the stock exchange for his club of Turin (Juventus Turin).

For the sport team manager, a project is "an investment that requires a set of logically linked and coordinated activities performed over a finite period of time in order to accomplish a unique result in support of a desired outcome"⁷. We can link this definition to the example of a season which is composed of a game of soccer. In a game of soccer, the sport team manager makes an investment, he puts the team on the pitch and with all trainings and outside stuff he did with the team are used to support the desired outcome.

According to the Guild of Planning Planet, we know four types of program:

Program Characteristic	Type of Program			
	Strategic Program	Operational Program	Multi-Project Program	Mega-Project
General Purpose	Deliver assets and benefits that are directly linked to attaining the sponsoring organization's future state	Deliver assets and benefits that are critical to the sponsoring organization's day to day operations	Achieve synergies from projects with common traits such as shared resources, similar clients or product technology	Deliver a specific asset to the sponsoring organization
Key Differentiating Feature	Link to a specific business goal or strategic initiative	Relative interdependence of constituent projects	Relative interdependence of constituent projects	Significantly larger than the sponsoring organization's typical projects
Reason for Grouping Projects	Early results influence decisions about later projects	Minimize negative impact to ongoing operations	Benefits expected from synergy	So much larger than the organization's typical projects.

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Sport is a very specific area which because it reunites the all four types of program. First of all, it applies to strategic program because of the one goal we have in a season: win the championship. Second, it applies to the operational program because of the facilities. A sport manager has to keep the facilities safe and in a good shape. Third, it applies to multi-project program because of the repetition of the game week after weeks. And finally, it applies to mega-project because of joining the playoffs in a world cup of football or in the NFL.

⁷ DUNCAN, W. R. (2018, January 13). a Linked In discussion. Retrieved from <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6357416976318558208/>

⁸ PP ADMIN. (2015, February 11). | Project Controls - planning, scheduling, cost management and forensic analysis (Planning Planet). Retrieved from <http://www.planningplanet.com/guild/gpccar/introduction-to-managing-project-controls>

We know that we have 5 different types of assets, according to the guild which are human assets, information assets, physical assets, intangible assets (which are assets you cannot remove or modify) and physical assets. A sport manager used each type of them. First of all, he used human assets which the players and his staff to rule the team. Second, information assets are all the knowledge bring by the people, already there in the entity. The sport manager used this to rule the team and make the team work. Obviously, a sport manager has all his decisions directed by the financial assets. If he has the money, he can do whatever he wants like Paris Saint Germain and if there are no money available he has to try something else. Fourth, intangible assets are all assets already in the club, like facilities and supporter which can help the sport manager to succeed in his project. Finally, the last one, physical assets are all assets controlled by the operational staff and it is all the materials used to help the players to progress and to train.

“A “portfolio of projects” is no different than any investment portfolio, the objective being to minimize the risk and maximize the return. Any organization, be it Owner or Contractor has a portfolio of assets (resources) available to dedicate to projects, with the objective being to develop the best “mix” of projects which will generate the most favorable return on those assets.”⁹

In a soccer season you have 38 weeks so 38 projects under the watch of the project portfolio which is reach the goals set up during the season. So, the portfolio of project is the season. To manage this the project portfolio management is all the means set up to succeed like the trainings. Maximizing the return could be calculate like this, make bet on young players and succeed in winning many games.

According to the Guild, a portfolio of assets is all the assets available for a project manager. In my case, for a sport manager his portfolio of assets is the players, the staff, the money, the facility, the supporter, the knowledge and all the materials used.

This paper has been researched and written to answer the following questions:

- How is it possible to solve disputes?
- How many solutions do we have?
- What could be the best solution to solve these issues?

METHODOLOGY

Step 1: Objective statement

In the sport area has risen some new conflicts because of the money inside sports and the importance of the player. We saw that George WEAH a former “Ballon d’Or” was elected

9 PP ADMIN. (2015, February 11). | Project Controls - planning, scheduling, cost management and forensic analysis (Planning Planet). Retrieved from <http://www.planningplanet.com/guild/gpccar/introduction-to-managing-project-controls>

president of Liberia in January 2018¹⁰. Unfortunately, the rate of disputes in sports has risen too. To solve this new problems ADR (Alternative Dispute resolution) has just risen in sports which has to help them to find the best way to solve a problem. I will present the different solutions to issues in sport and choose the best way to solve them.

Step 2: Feasible alternative¹¹

This paper has been researched to find how many solutions do we have to solve a dispute in sports. We have different steps which could be used to prevent & or resolve dispute. We have the prevention, negotiation, standing neutral, non-binding resolution, private binding resolution & litigation (which are all ADR). I will try after that to find the best solution by using a multi attribute decision making (MADM). Moreover, I will try to see if a contract could be added to this solution to prevent and facilitate the solve of the dispute.

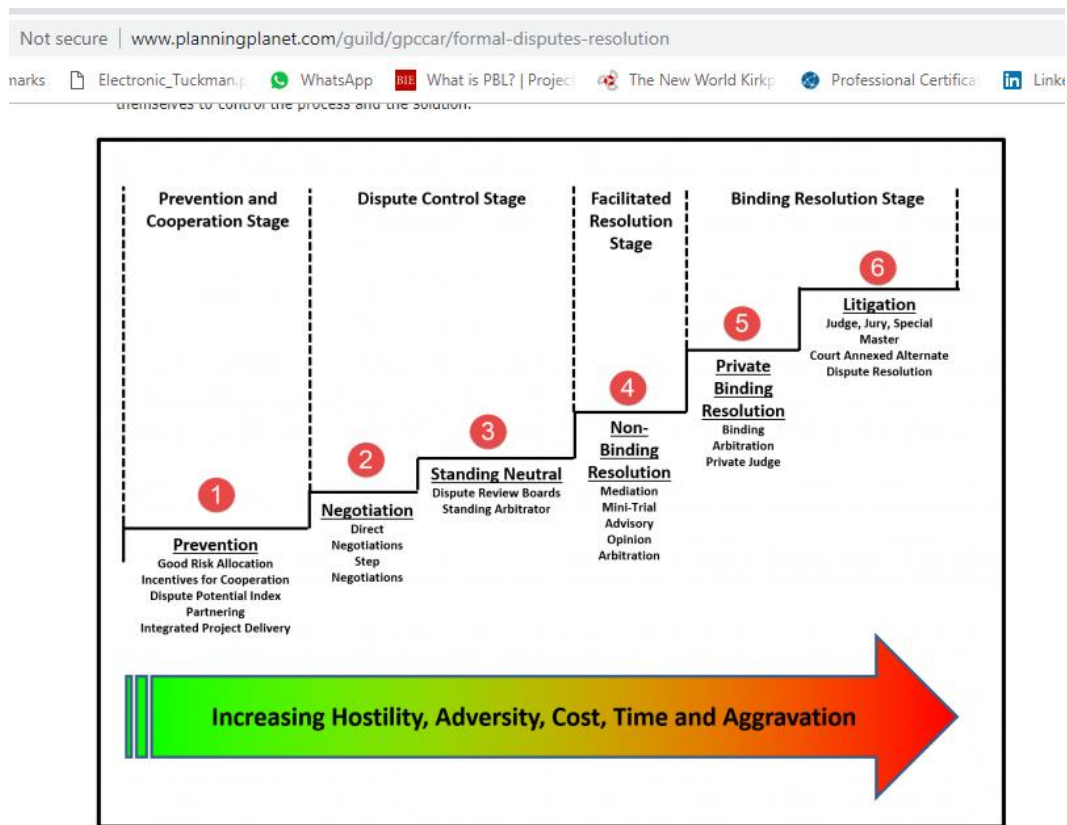


Figure 2 - Illustrating the Escalation Steps in the ADR Process
 Source: Adapted from The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice 3rd Edition, 2014, Coleman, Deutsch & Marcus

¹⁰ Kadiri, G. (2017, December 29). George Weah, l'enfant du ghetto devenu président du Liberia. Retrieved from https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2017/12/29/george-weah-l-enfant-du-ghetto-devenu-president_5235874_3212.html

¹¹ PLANNING PLANNET. (2018). GUILD OF PROJECT CONTROLS COMPENDIUM and REFERENCE (CaR) | Project Controls - planning, scheduling, cost management and forensic analysis (Planning Planet). Retrieved from <http://www.planningplanet.com/guild/gpccar/formal-disputes-resolution>

Step 3: Outcome of each feasible alternative¹²

3.1 Outcome of prevention

Prevention is the first step to succeed in avoid a dispute. In this case we use prevention if we know some problems which could happen. Prevention is when you faced to different known problem. In this subject you know that some problems could happen when a player is called to play for his country. To avoid this in a contract a club could put some conditions to allow him or not to do that.

However, in this first alternative we only can talk and find solution about well-known fact. Sometimes we know the possible issues, but we cannot find a perfect solution for both parties, so we hope this problem will never show up like if the player has to choose to represent his club or his sponsor if they are different.

This first step of resolving dispute is simple and give a chance to the relationship between a player and a club to the best. It is non-costly, need a few times before signing the contract and find agreement between all parts and it allows avoidance of many and many issues.

3.2 Outcome of negotiation

The second alternatives to solve solution in sport area is negotiation. Negotiation is really close to prevention because it allows the people involved to discuss without the help of someone outside. It is a formal discussion to find a solution to a problem. Contrary to prevention the problem happened, and both parts have to face to this problem. For example, in soccer a player wants to leave his club. He finds an agreement with another club and now he has to discuss with his current employer, his actual club to leave him. The negotiation begins. To help in the negotiation both parts can use lawyer and councilors.

Obviously, negotiation has a black side. Sometimes it is impossible to find a solution and negotiation takes time with no results. Both parts do not want to change their minds and just wait for the other to give up. It can lead to some really embarrassing situations. Like in 2017 and Ousmane DEMBELE a French soccer player wanted to leave Borussia DORTMUND to go to FC BARCELONA he started a strike of training to leave because his former club did not want to let him go. The negotiation ended badly.

But, negotiation will not break up the relationships between the involved parties, even in some cases, the relationship will be strengthened after negotiating. The process during a negotiation is most of the time confidential and the reputation of the parties usually won't be damaged because of a negotiation but it can when the institution is over personal intention.

¹² Fang, Q. (2018). Dispute Resolution in professional sports. Retrieved from <https://pmworldjournal.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/pmwj70-May2018-Fang-dispute-resolution-in-professional-sports-student-paper.pdf>

3.3 Outcome of standing neutral

In this case we have the possibility to call some externals (one to three) people known by the party and professional of the sectors to help them to find a solution.¹³ They have to be independent and have a former training as mediator or arbitrators.

Their goal is to motivate the parties, collaborate and try to plan each solution to solve each problem. This solution is one the last free and with no huge consequences because it is only dialogue and the people involved just want to find the best solution.

3.4 Outcome of non-binding resolution

“a non-binding and informal procedure based on an agreement to mediate in which each party undertakes to attempt in good faith to negotiate with the other party with a view to settling a sports-related dispute. The parties are assisted in their negotiations by a CAS mediator.”¹⁴

This definition of a non-binding resolution is an illustration of what could be a non-binding resolution. A non-binding resolution involved the assistance of a third party, but this party is someone with a good experience and some references in the area.

A non-binding resolution such as mediation is a flexible process to be quick and to allow the contractors to save money. It is confidential, and it is based on the willing of each party so accept the solution is easier because they came from them. They have the power to decide about the issue and the conditions of the solving.

Unfortunately, a non-binding solution could be stopped at any times, the agreement is not compulsory. It could lead to a fail. Then the finality is low.

3.5 Outcome of private binding resolution

In this section we will talk about the private binding resolution which is when you “submit your dispute to one or more impartial persons for a final and binding decision”³. This third part will give an arbitral award. There are several arbitral institutions like the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) and UK sports Resolution (UKSR) which consist of sports experts. It is more suitable than legislation because it is only composed with former player and professional in the sport business.

¹³ MASTIN, D. B. (2013, November 12). Dispute Review Boards to the Rescue. Retrieved from https://www.americanbar.org/publications/under_construction/2013/november_2013/dispute_boards_to_the_rescue/

¹⁴ CAS. (n.d.). CAS Mediation Rules. Retrieved from: http://www.tas-cas.org/fileadmin/user_upload/CAS_Mediation_Rules_2016_clean.pdf

³ American Arbitration Association. (2018). Using ADR to resolve collegiate, professional, and sports-business disputes. Retrieved from https://www.adr.org/sites/default/files/document_repository/Using%20ADR%20to%20Resolve%20Collegiate%20Professional%20and%20Sport%20Business%20Disputes.pdf

It is private and confidential. It allows the people involved to find a quick solution and practical solution. The third party involved could not be the court.

The parties involved are really deep in the process because they have the possibility to choose their representors, they can participate in the process and give their point of views. The process is less formal than litigation. The arbitration is final and binding upon the parties involved. It allows part to save time and costs.

3.6 Outcome of litigation

Litigation is when you used justice to help you in court. So, both parts have to accept the judgement event if it does not satisfy them. It is the last alternative and the most expensive and it takes time.

It is also the most formal way with many trials, then a judgement and the opportunity of maybe one or two stages more to make a “retrial”.

Also, especially in the sport area people have short career and issues has to be solved very quickly. Which is incompatible with litigation, because such a procedure takes time. In average if the parties go to the court it takes one year. But it could be more. In addition to that sport area is a very complicated field and sometimes people who are judge are not competent to solve issued. If a club and a player go to court it is the end of the relationship, it is broken. The trust is dead and the relationship in consumed, cooperation is over and impossible.

However, there is also some positives aspects. The winner of such a procedure is clear and have a popularity because of the transparency. The development of sport is also helped because the court has a history with and people could know better and better issued and how to solve them. It is the most extreme solution.

I make a chart (compensatory scoring model) to help me to choose the best option.¹⁵ To make this chart I take thirteen attribute and I will explain you why.

3.7.1 Submission

This first item I took was to explain in which alternative go first the people when there are in trouble. It allows us to understand the ranking of the choice of a solution.

3.7.2 Party autonomy

The second item allows us to analyze if the party involve in the issue can take their own decision or they are guide by other people or instance.

¹⁵ SHERWIN, P. (2016). Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of International Arbitration - Proskauer on International Litigation and Arbitration. Retrieved from <https://www.proskauerguide.com/arbitration/19/I>

3.7.3 Freedom to choose a neutral and competent decisionmaker.

This item allows us to understand and to rank the possibility for the parties to choose which people are going to help them in solving the dispute.

3.7.4 Speed

This item is quite obvious, but we need to explain it to avoid any confusion. Speed is basically the time it takes to resolve the dispute. It allows us to show which one takes less or more time than another.

3.7.5 Cost

As the previous one, this one is quite simple, we use it to rank the solution from the cheapest to the more expensive.

3.7.6 Confidentiality

The sixtieth item shows us if the solution is private or anyone can have an eye on. We rank the solution to the more close and “dark” to the more open.

3.7.7 Ability to Select Place and Language of the Arbitration

This item describes if the alternative gives more or less freedom to the party involved. They can choose, they can have someone to help them, they can have someone to choose for them and they can have someone to choose for them or it is already set up by texts like in court.

3.7.8 Flexibility of process

Like the previous item we talk here about the freedom in the process of each alternative. We rank them from the most flexible to the less flexible. In court we have texts to help us and it is all written, but in other like prevention nothing is written so there are many and many solutions and possibilities.

3.7.9 Limited discovery

This item helps us to explain if the case will be fix with traditional way and solid past examples or a new interpretation is possible. It is basically very good for sports team who does not any trouble and to find a quick solution to any issues.

3.7.10 Absence of appeal

This item is quite basic. We just want to know if it is possible to make an appeal or not.

3.7.11 Enforceability

This one of the most important and the score should be counting twice. This item helps us to see if a decision of any alternative is respected in the future or not. We rank our alternatives from the most respected to the less one.

3.7.12 Potential need for court intervention

We want to know in this item if the attribute will avoid a trial or if it has a pretention to lead the parties in court.

3.7.13 Arbitrators' Inability to Consolidate Actions or Join Third Parties

The last item I choose to use in my chart is the one who allow us to rank the alternatives according to their abilities in finding a solution with an arbitrator and if the arbitrator is able to solve the issue.

Attribute	Prevention	Negotiation	Standing Neutral	non-binding	Binding	Litigation
Submission	2	3	1	2	3	2
Party autonomy	3	2	2	2	1	0
Freedom to Choose a Neutral and Competent Decisionmaker	3	3	3	3	2	0
Speed	3	1	2	2	2	1
Cost	2	2	2	3	3	2
Confidentiality	2	1	3	3	3	1
Ability to Select Place and Language of the Arbitration	3	3	2	2	2	1
Flexibility of Process	3	2	2	2	2	0
Limited Discovery	1	1	1	2	2	3
Absence of Appeal	3	3	3	3	3	0
Enforceability (it is the executory force of the alternatives, if a judgment from here will be respected)	1	2	1	2	1	2

Potential Need for Court Intervention	1	1	2	2	2	3
Arbitrators' Inability to Consolidate Actions or Join Third Parties	1	1	1	1	1	2
TOTAL	2,16	1,64	1,78	2,07	1,93	1,21

Figure 2 table of scoring¹⁶

- 3= Excellent performance
- 2= Good performance
- 1= Acceptable performance
- 0= Bad performance

Step 4: Selection of criterion

With this chart, we see that we have four alternatives with a high mark, prevention, standing neutral, non-binding and binding solution. The best solution could be now prevention, but we have to further. So, for the next part I will be focused on the alternatives above 1,70 to solve which is the more suitable.

FINDINGS

Step 5: Analysis and comparison of the alternatives

With the chart up, we have a first rank to help us in the choice of the best alternative. The best alternative seems to be prevention with a score of 2.16. In the second place we have the non-binding resolution. Third is the binding resolution and in the fourth place we have the standing neutral solution. But, with only this chart we cannot choose prevention. This first chart show that all the solutions are very closed, and the details are very important. We need more analysis to choose the solution.

We have to go further and use other tables to help us and guide us to the best choice. I will use the additive weighting in the next part technique to see if prevention is still the first choice after introducing the weights.

Step 6: Selection of the preferred alternatives

To help us comparing, I used the additive weighting technique which is one of the compensatory model techniques. Considering the importance of each attribute, I decided the relative rank and then made the chart below:

¹⁶ Figure by Lucas BOUQUEREL

Attribute	STEP 1	STEP 2			Prevention		Standing Neutral		Non-Binding		Binding	
	Relative Rank	Normalizes Weights	A	B	A*B	C	A*C	D	A*D	E	A*E	
Submission	7	7/91	=	0,08	2	0,16	1	0,08	2	0,16	3	0,24
Party autonomy	9	9/91	=	0,1	3	0,3	2	0,2	2	0,2	1	0,1
Freedom to Choose a Neutral and Competent Decisionmaker	8	8/91	=	0,09	3	0,27	3	0,27	3	0,27	2	0,18
Speed	12	12/91	=	0,13	3	0,39	2	0,26	2	0,26	2	0,26
Cost	13	13/91	=	0,14	2	0,28	2	0,28	3	0,42	3	0,42
Confidentiality	11	11/91	=	0,12	2	0,24	3	0,36	3	0,36	3	0,36
Ability to Select Place and Language of the Arbitration	5	5/91	=	0,06	3	0,18	2	0,12	2	0,12	2	0,12
Flexibility of Process	10	10/91	=	0,11	3	0,33	2	0,22	2	0,22	2	0,22
Limited Discovery	2	2/91	=	0,02	1	0,02	1	0,02	2	0,04	2	0,04
Absence of Appeal	1	1/91	=	0,01	3	0,03	3	0,03	3	0,03	3	0,03
Enforceability	6	6/91	=	0,07	1	0,07	1	0,07	2	0,14	1	0,07
Potential Need for Court Intervention	3	3/91	=	0,03	1	0,03	2	0,06	2	0,06	2	0,06
Arbitrators' Inability to Consolidate Actions or Join Third Parties	4	4/91	=	0,04	1	0,04	1	0,04	1	0,04	1	0,04
SUM	91		SUM	1	SUM	2,34	SUM	2,01	SUM	2,32	SUM	2,14

With this chart we see that PREVENTION is still the best choice. With these data I can do ratio to know how prevention is better to the others.

- Prevention VS Standing Neutral: $2.34/2.01 * 100 = 116,41\%$
- Prevention VS Non-Binding: $2.34/2.32 * 100 = 100,86\%$
- Prevention VS Binding: $2.34/2.14 * 100 = 109,34\%$

We see that Prevention is really better than Standing Neutral and Binding resolution. We also observe that Prevention is really closed to Non-Binding resolution, but it is still a better solution. We can conclude that Prevention is really the best solution.

Step 7: Best resolution and recommendation

7.1 The Best Solution

Thanks to the table I made we know that Prevention is the best solution. Here are the reasons. First is a quick process which allow the party to involve finding a solution by themselves and choose external people to help. Second, it is a very flexible solution which use dialogue to satisfy both parts. Third, this alternative is really far from the court and if the party take times to discuss, the probability to go to court is very low. Fourth, it preserves the career of the athlete because it is very confidential, and all discussion are to preserve both parts. According to that and my charts up, we can officially say that prevention is the best solution.

7.2 Post evaluation of the chosen result

For an example, I am a sport club and I never choose to use Prevention. Someone recommend me that option and on my next disputes I decided to use that.

To see if the recommendation works we can set up some indicators. We can analyze the time saved and the costs saved compares to former disputes. We can do that each year or every two years.

For the reputation of the people we can only make survey to know if the popularity is down or up after a conflict.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I discuss and compare about many alternatives to resolve sports disputes. I found out that prevention is more suitable one to solve disputes.

I used first a MADA technique to state the problem. As we know, for the athletes it is sometime confuse for them to know which solution to use. When they face a problem with a sport clubs there are alone, and they are not aware about all alternatives they have with ADR.

I identify prevention, negotiation, standing neutral, non-binding resolution, private binding resolution & litigation. After discussing their feature and outcome, I removed Litigation and Negotiation because of their bad performance in key criteria.

For the last part I used additive weighting technique and found out that Mediation is the best resolution to sports dispute.

This is why I can say that an athlete we he face to a conflict has better chance to succeed if he used prevention.

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About the Author



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Lucas Bouquerel is a SKEMA student in Project Management and Business Development. Born in Paris in 1995, he already done two internships in project management. One was in digital (complete refund of a website in a French new company) and the other one was in an American company, specialized in business travel for pharmaceuticals group. He always worked in France but traveled a lot (Asia, Africa, South America, Europe) and wants to work worldwide. He did two semesters abroad, one in Belo, Horizonte, Brazil and one in Ljubljana, Slovenia each time for six months. Before the business school he studies economics in “La Sorbonne”, in Paris for two years. He is now in his last years of his Master 2 degree in SKEMA Business School and seeking for opportunities worldwide.

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