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# FLY BALLS AND FLYING HOT DOGS

It was 2009. A fan was at a baseball game. He got hit in the eye. Was it a fly ball? No, it was a flying hot dog. The home team's mascot threw it. This may sound silly. But the injury wasn't. Surgery was needed. The man decided to **sue**.

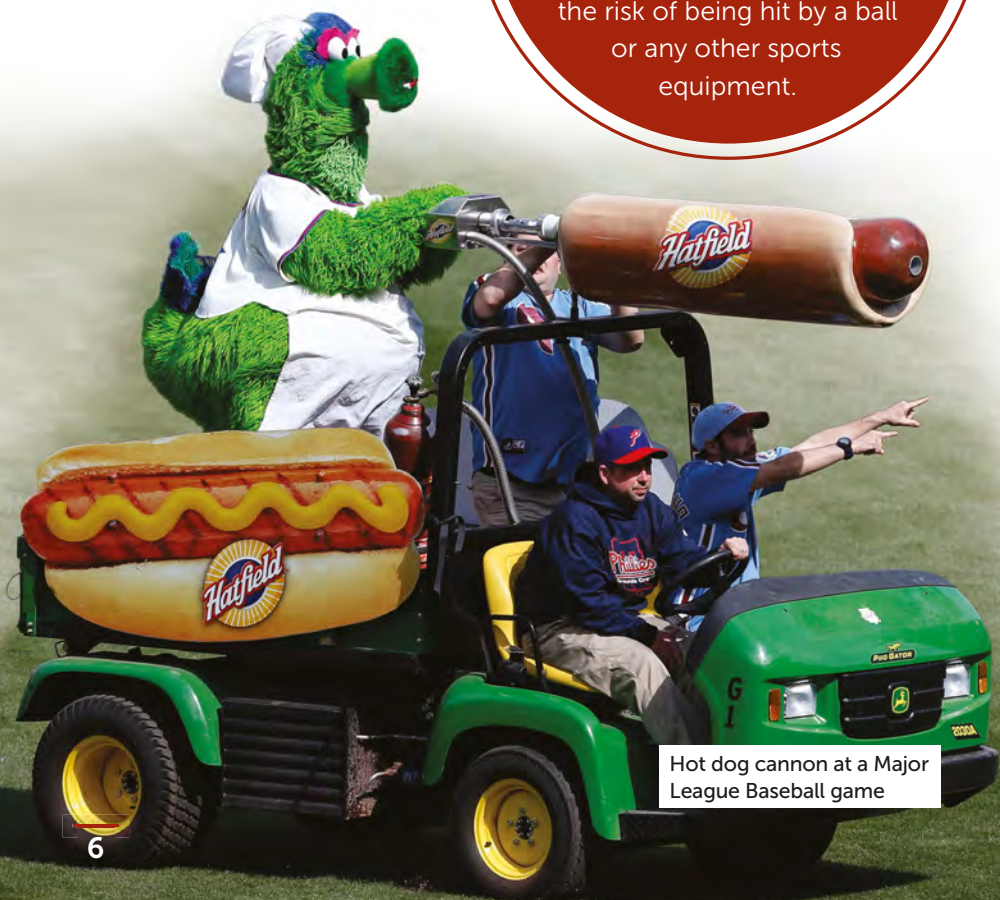
A jury met. They threw out the case. But the man did not give up. He went to a higher court. Judges there said the case could go forward. Why? The man was at a baseball game. Getting hit with a ball was a known risk. Being struck by a hot dog was not.

The case went to trial again. In the end, the man lost.



### Fast Fact

As a result of the flying hot dog case, courts now follow a standard known as the "baseball rule." This states that a fan who goes to a game is accepting the risk of being hit by a ball or any other sports equipment.



Hot dog cannon at a Major League Baseball game



M.I.A. at the 2012 Super Bowl

It was the 2012 Super Bowl. M.I.A. performed at halftime. All eyes were on the rapper. She held up her middle finger at the camera. Fans saw it. Many were not happy.

The National Football League (NFL) acted fast. They took M.I.A. to court. Why? She had signed an agreement. It said her show would be “wholesome.” M.I.A. was fined. But that was not all. The NFL added the cost of her airtime. This was two minutes. The total fine was \$16.6 million. Both sides agreed to **settle**.

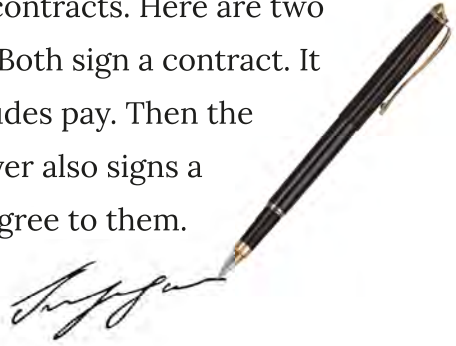


It was 2022. A fan sued two teams. One was the New York Giants. The other was the New York Jets. Both teams play in New Jersey. Neither plays in New York. The fan called this “false advertising.” His suit claimed emotional distress. He asked for \$6 billion.

What do these cases have in common? They all have to do with sports. Some may seem silly. Others are serious. Sports are not just for fun. They are big business. Deals are made every day. This is where sports law comes in. It guides decisions. These may be about safety or fairness. Sports law helps everyone work together.

Much of sports law deals with **contracts**. These are agreements. They set rules. All parties sign. A contract is not just a piece of paper. It has the force of law.

There are many kinds of sports contracts. Here are two examples. A team hires a coach. Both sign a contract. It tells what is expected. That includes pay. Then the coach recruits players. Each player also signs a contract. Rules are set. Players agree to them. They get paid in return.



Even a ticket is a contract. One person sells. Another buys. The ticket is a promise. It tells what a fan will get.

Sometimes promises are broken. One side feels let down. Then that side may sue. This means starting a **lawsuit**. Lawsuits get tested in court. Some are thrown out. Others go to trial. They can be for one person or many. A suit often results in small changes. But it can correct major wrongs.

### **Civil versus Criminal Law**

Many conflicts in sports law are civil cases. A civil case is a dispute between two parties. It could be over a contract or an injury. Criminal cases are different. In those, the government charges someone with breaking the law. A court decides if that person is guilty.

