LAW
STEIN
ANDERSON

2601 Main Street, Irvine, CA 92614
(949) 501-4800 | Info@LSALawyers.com

What You Need to Know About Transferring Your Season Tickets

In many parts of the United States, football is more than a sport—it is a way of life and a passion that we often share across generations. While a fan might pass down their love for an NFL or college football team to family, passing down season tickets to them is another matter. Each team has a different policy about transferring season tickets, and teams may restrict transfers during the ticket holder's lifetime and after.

Season Tickets Are a Contract

Football has been America's favorite sport since the 1970s.[1] For season ticket holders, the athleticism and elements of entertainment are part of the fun. However, they must also heed the fine print. Legally speaking, a season ticket is a contract between the team and the ticket holder. Even though a fan pays for a season ticket, it is considered the team's property. As a result, the team can generally put whatever terms and conditions it wants on the contract, including a ticket transfer policy. When a fan purchases a season ticket, they agree to comply with this policy and the other stated terms and conditions.

What constitutes a season ticket "transfer" might be different than what you assume. A physical ticket is not transferred. Rather, the name of the official ticket holder changes on the ticket holder account.

Like other contracts, a season ticket holder agreement can run to several pages and contain dense legalese. Consider the Season Ticket Member Agreement Terms and Conditions from the Buffalo Bills. Section 10 deals with Transfer Requests and states:

A "Transfer" is defined as change of ownership on an account when the name of the Official Season Ticket Member of Record is changing from one name to another . . . All Transfer requests are subject to review by the Bills and the Bills reserve the right to approve or deny any such request in its sole discretion. Transfer requests may be received from February 15 to March 31. [2]

Navigating these agreements, while daunting, is necessary if the fan wants to transfer their season tickets properly during their life or at their death.

Season Ticket Transfer Policy Varies Widely by Team

Team policies about ticket holder transfer rights are as varied as team colors. Some have open transfer policies; others are more restrictive. Many teams restrict transfers to a single individual or certain family members, such as a surviving spouse.

A team may also have a specific policy regarding season ticket transfers upon the death of the ticket holder. Not all teams publicly announce their policy, if they have one at all. The only way to learn about it may be to contact the ticket office.

Here are a few more examples of what NFL teams allow fans to do (and prohibit them from doing) with their season tickets:

- The New England Patriots have a policy regarding the transfer process when a season ticket member dies that says, "Family members of the Season Ticket Member of record can submit a request to transfer the account into someone else's name, and the Patriots will review the request."[3]
- The Denver Broncos' policy is that only the personal representative or executor of a deceased season ticket holder may sign the transfer form on behalf of the ticket holder.[4] Further, the Broncos limit transfers to spouses, children, siblings, and parents.[5]
- The Green Bay Packers permit transfers to qualifying heirs upon the death of a season ticket holder using the Packers-approved transfer form and the ticket holder's will.[6] Green Bay allows only one individual to own season tickets, so if the deceased leaves their season ticket to more than one child—and the children cannot agree on the new owner—the ticket reverts to the team.

There is also a wide range of season ticket transfer policies in college football.

- The Oregon State Beavers' policy is that the season ticket holder on record can transfer "the opportunity to order season tickets" to a spouse, domestic partner, or child.[7] However, tickets cannot be transferred to a trust.[8]
- Alabama season ticket transfers are permitted only in the case of the death of a season ticket holder, and seats can be transferred only to the deceased's surviving spouse.[9] Alabama requires a copy of the deceased's death certificate and a seat transfer agreement signed by the surviving spouse.[10]

- The Michigan Wolverines allow nonstudent season tickets to be transferred to a recipient who is 18 years or older during the ticket holder's lifetime, subject to a transfer fee based on seat location.[11]

Plan Ahead to Transfer Your Season Ticket

Including season tickets in an estate plan can be a way to intertwine your personal legacy with a team's legacy. To avoid a botched handoff, huddle up with your attorney before the snap and go over the x's and o's so you can take proactive steps now, such as contacting the team and completing a ticket transfer form that can be stored with your other estate planning documents.

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1) Jeffrey M. Jones, Football Retains Dominant Position as Favorite U.S. Sport, Gallup (Feb. 7, 2024), https://news.gallup.com/poll/610046/football-retains-dominant-position-favorite-sport.aspx.

2) Buffalo Bills, Season Ticket Member Agreement: Terms and Conditions (Feb. 1, 2024), https://static.clubs.nfl.com/image/upload/v1707165749/bills/alltrlghyghynrn3rsky.pdf.

3) New England Patriots, Pass It On Program: Frequently Asked Questions, https://static.clubs.nfl.com/image/upload/patriots/shblqisotp1brt6bmqap.pdf (last visited Oct. 30, 2024).

4) Season Ticket Transfers, DenverBroncos.com, https://www.denverbroncos.com/tickets/seasontickets/transfers (last visited Oct. 30, 2024).

5) Id.

6) Transferring Packers Season Tickets, GB, https://www.packers.com/tickets/transferring-season-tickets (last visited Oct. 30, 2024).

7) Season Ticket Transfer Policy, OSUBeavers.com, https://osubeavers.com/sports/2020/1/13/season-tickettransfer-policy (last visited Oct. 30, 2024).

8) Id.

9) 2023 Football TIDE PRIDE and Season Ticket Pricing, Rolltide.com, https://rolltide.com/sports/2022/12/16/tidepride-changes-for-2023 (last visited Oct. 30, 2024).

10) Id

11) Football Season Ticket Transfer, MGoBlue.com, https://mgoblue.com/sports/2017/6/16/tickets-transfer-football (last visited Oct. 30, 2024).