

# Much more than sports law

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Jose Juan Pintó Sala just turned 64. He was born in Barcelona in 1951, the eldest of seven children. His career in law spans over four decades. "I have never stopped to assess the years, but I am pleased with them," he says. He is well known for his relationship with sports law and for his job as an arbitrator at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), however he notes that this sector represents only 25% of the activity of Pintó Ruiz & Del Valle, the economists and law firm of which he currently presides. "It just has more impact. We do more commercial and corporate, but for sport, there are a few people who do it, it's more noticeable and that is why we stand out quite a lot," he says. At 87, his father still goes to work every day. "Not only has he taught me about law but about the rules of conduct in life. Everything I know I owe it to him."

After finishing his degree at 23, he joined the family firm. "I'm lucky to enjoy this. You end up having fun." However, he notes that today, in a much more global world than the one he started his career in, one must know concepts from many subjects while at the same time learning how to find a specialty.

He argues that one of his principles is being able to diagnose the cases, being realistic, which in turn means losing fewer lawsuits. His current firm, the result of the merger in 1999 between the Firm Pintó Ruiz and the Madrid firm Del Valle Abogados, has offices in Barcelona, Madrid and Palma de Mallorca and employs 70 people, and revenue equally split between the national and international market. They are a big family: "80% of the board started working here after leaving school," he explains.



*As an arbitrator at the CAS, he deals with clubs around the world and defended Messi in a lawsuit against Nike.*

Troubles or anxieties are always part of his career as a lawyer, but Pintó Sala believes that a professional should know how to "keep a cool and wise head and disposition." "When dominated by anxiety or fear, you lose the serenity and coolness required to get both the diagnosis and the necessary defence elements right," he adds. His poise is visible

in his two roles: at his office in Barcelona and in his job as an arbitrator at the CAS, a position he holds since 2004 approximately. He travels back and forth to Lausanne (Switzerland), where the court is located. "Anyone who is part of it must respect justice, know how things work and be experienced," he sums up. Resisting pressure is another key point: "People and institutions appreciate those who do not give in to pressure," he says. Away from court, he deals with clubs all around the world. As part of his track record, it's worth highlighting his defence of Lionel Messi in a lawsuit that Nike filed against the player and Adidas in relation to an image rights contract.

On the financial front, he admits that "there has never been great successes" when it comes to investments or ventures. Supporting a film with Victoria Abril and investing money in several restaurants have been some of his bets. "I don't invest on anything anymore, I am committed to my thing," he laughs. As a curiosity, he is also a shareholder of the RCD Espanyol football club, however he's got a Barça membership.

Pintó Sala is the father of five children. His eldest, currently 34 and his only son, studied law but works in the financial sector. His second child, a girl, works as a criminal lawyer and the third (another girl) studies industrial engineering. The youngest, twin daughters are 10 years old. In his younger years, he spent his time off racing in rallies, a hobby that he later would have to quit. He was also part of the national bobsleigh team, a winter sport which involves running down a narrow track in some sort of sledge. His involvement was purely circumstantial but he ended up competing internationally.

Now he barely has any time off and when he does, he spends it with his family. After 40 years of experience and having being involved in the world of sport for a long time, he's well aware of the evolution in the relationship between sport and business in recent times. When asked about this relationship in football, he says they go hand in hand: "There's no doubt it's a sport, but it's also a business."

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