

INSIGHT

# A feast of football

When Qatar hosted a record-breaking world cup last December, the Firm played a vital role behind the scenes.



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**T**he 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar ended with one of the most memorable finals in history as Lionel Messi's Argentina beat France to the title in a thrilling penalty shootout win.

Preparations for the event started years in advance, with the Firm becoming trusted advisers of the Qatar government's Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC) tasked with organizing the event.

Our work with the client began in 2013, when now White & Case partner Payvand Vahdat was deputy general counsel at the SC, leading the infrastructure team of the client's legal department.

He says: "I joined the SC in 2011 shortly after Qatar's successful bid to host the World Cup. Soon after, White & Case was appointed to advise on the construction program.

"We chose the Firm because of its excellent construction experience, especially with FIDIC-based contracts. The SC had decided to use the FIDIC suite of contracts, so I pushed for the Firm to be engaged, especially partner Ellis Baker.

"It was a massive project involving the construction of eight stadia and 40 training sites, but it later grew to include the construction of a cruise ship terminal and the conversion of Old Doha Port to a tourist destination.

"Partners Ellis Baker, Michael Turrini and their outstanding team were my initial contacts in the Firm but, due to the sheer size and breadth of the construction program, our relationship with White & Case quickly expanded, requiring expertise from across the Firm's many practices and jurisdictions."

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PAYVAND VAHDAT,  
PARTNER, DOHA



The Firm's key role in the World Cup project continued when Payvand joined the Firm in 2019.

“At this stage construction was well underway,” he explains. “We were already planning for younger lawyers to take lead of the SC legal department so, when I had an opportunity to join the Firm in Doha, I discussed it with the team and got their blessing.

“I was ready for a new challenge and wanted to work for a large firm with a strong US presence, plus I knew so many members of the team.

“From the SC's perspective, they could still work with me (just on the other side), while for the Firm, I was able to shed some light on how SC's in-house counsel operated and what pressures they were under.”

White & Case played a major role over the course of the FIFA World Cup project.

Payvand says: “On the construction front, we worked on the preparation of the construction contracts the SC has used with nearly all its counterparties and advised on stadium construction-related matters from the very beginning. I'd be surprised if any other firm has the stadium expertise that we have amassed over the last decade.

“On the non-construction side, we prepared the form commercial contracts that the SC used for the majority of its commercial procurements.

**“Looking back at the past ten years, both during my time with the SC and more recently as part of the White & Case team, we've done an incredible job.”**



*The World Cup itself proved a great opportunity to give clients a once-in-a-lifetime experience and Payvand (foreground) got to see Lionel Messi lift the trophy following a thrilling final*



"This work was done in 2013-2014 and was led by partner Charbel Abou Charaf, supported by the wider network.

"These contracts were used on most hospitality matters surrounding the event, including the negotiation of the master accommodation agreement with international hotel group Accor, the preparation and negotiation of cruise ship management agreements, and a suite of agreements for match hospitality experiences."

The Firm also advised on fan zone and fan experience matters and real estate rights regarding the stadiums and training sites.

In addition, we assisted the client on global intellectual property and data privacy rights (including complex copyright, trademark, and social media related matters), media matters (such as broadcasting, films and documentaries) and specific pre-tournament and tournament events, including the FIFA Arab Cup and World Cup Opening Ceremony.

"As you can imagine with an event of this size and profile, the Firm worked with a huge number of clients within the SC, plus many other organizations, such as FIFA and countless public and private counterparties."

The Firm's involvement in the World Cup continued during the event and during the wrap-up period and included inviting some Doha-based clients to matches, including from our Key Client, the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA).

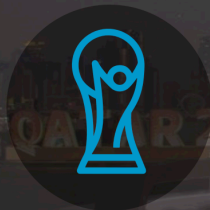
This was a very special client development opportunity for the Firm where we could offer them an experience like no other.

**"More than 50 lawyers have been involved in the work undertaken, spanning many practices and 13 offices. It is yet another example of the strength of the Firm."**

## 2022 FIFA World Cup facts



The event was the first winter World Cup to be held in the Northern Hemisphere



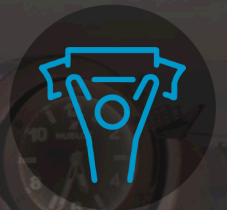
December's tournament is believed to be the most expensive World Cup ever



172 goals were scored – a record for World Cups played with 32 teams



3.4 millions spectators attended the games



An estimated 5 billion people engaged with the event on TV and online

Payvand is proud of the work the Firm did to help the Qatar government plan a tournament heralded as one of the best World Cups in recent years.

He says: "Looking back at the past ten years, both during my time with the SC and more recently as part of the White & Case team, we've done an incredible job."

**"It is a major feather in our cap and demonstrates our global sports, media and entertainment offering."**

"More than 50 lawyers have been involved in the work undertaken, spanning many practices and 13 offices. It is yet another example of the strength of the Firm."

"Our relationship with the client is as strong as it has ever been and is likely to grow given our exposure on this project with elite Qataris, who are likely to be the next generation of leaders of business and government."

"We have further cemented our position in Doha as the premier international law firm on the ground, with access to a world-class team across the globe. It has been an amazing journey and one we should be immensely proud of. It will continue to pay dividends for the Firm for years to come."

"It is a major feather in our cap and demonstrates our global sports, media and entertainment offering. As a result, we are actively pursuing strong opportunities with entities hosting major events."

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### More than a game

World Cup fundraising makes a difference.