

# Mishandling of American Players by the European League of Football (ELF)



JULY 29, 2024

## OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF JAMES (JJ) BRANIA-HOPP

Over the past four weeks, Lee Johnson Global PR has been engaged in communications with the European League of Football (ELF) on behalf of our client, James "JJ" Brania-Hopp. Mr. Brania-Hopp is a victim of discriminatory player protocols and transfer rules within the European League of Football.

Brania-Hopp was initially acquired by The Schwäbisch Hall Unicorns in the GFL (German Football League) on June 29, 2024. The Unicorns allowed another American import player to return to the team after a transaction fell through with the Rhein Fire (ELF). After 4 days with the Unicorns, Brania-Hopp was released from his contract and signed to the Barcelona Dragons (ELF) on July 2, 2024.

According to an agreed upon transfer rule, players transferring specifically from AFVD (American Football Verband Deutschland) to ELF must accept a 3-game suspension. **"This rule is in place to ensure that players who still have obligations to the releasing club/franchise cannot simply evade them."** The Schwäbisch Hall Unicorns agreed to transfer Brania-Hopp to the Barcelona Dragons. Despite the transfer agreement between the two teams, the ELF has strictly enforced rules blocking his transfer and imposed a suspension.

Once acquired by the Barcelona Dragons, Brania-Hopp was forced to endure unethical player conditions which included no access to a gym, no wifi, two hour round trip travel for practice, and a team of players boycotting games due to compensation issues. As a result of these circumstances, Brania-Hopp and the Barcelona Dragons agreed to part ways leaving him free to play for any league or team outside of the ELF. Mr. Brania-Hopp was quickly acquired by the Vienna Knights of the AFL (Austrian Football League), which has no standing transfer agreement with the ELF. After playing for the Vienna Knights and closing out the season, two ELF teams attempted to acquire Brania-Hopp. Both teams rescinded their offers based on the previous ELF suspension placed on Mr. Brania-Hopp's International Players Card from the Schwäbisch Hall Unicorns and Barcelona Dragons transfer.

# Mishandling of American Players by the European League of Football (ELF)



JULY 29, 2024

## OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF JAMES (JJ) BRANIA-HOPP

In an unofficial response by a top official of the IFAF (International Federation of American Football), the governing body of the GFL (German Football League), **"If he has played for the Vienna Knights, I would not understand why the transfer would fall under the AFVD/ELF contract. It would be a transfer from AFBÖ/Austria to ELF and as you have stated correctly, they do not have a contract with the ELF (yet)."**

Brania-Hopp's case highlights systemic flaws within ELF's governance, particularly regarding player transfers and contractual obligations. Special cases such as team transactions, injuries, and life emergencies should be taken into account by the European League of Football prior to enforcing an automatic 3-game suspension policy. In the event players are not being paid according to their team contracts and agreements, those players should have the right to transfer teams and be paid appropriately without enduring a suspension.

As of July 28, 2024, Mr. Brania-Hopp has not been paid according to his agreement with the Schwäbisch Hall Unicorns, and he has received no payments from the Barcelona Dragons for his time with the team. He intends to pursue legal action against both teams for contractual breaches and settlement from the European League of Football for discrimination, missed wages, reimbursed travel expenses, and time lost. To ensure no other players become victim to team transactions, he will continue to advocate for an ELF policy revision enabling players to transfer teams and resume play immediately under a new revised team transaction policy.

**Lee Johnson Global PR is dedicated to championing diversity, equality, and ethical commerce within the sports and entertainment business worldwide**

**For additional information or statement regarding this matter:**

**Nichole Lee | Lee Johnson Global PR**

**Media Representative for James Brania-Hopp**

**[sports@leejohnsonglobal.com](mailto:sports@leejohnsonglobal.com)**