

WilmerHale Pro Bono Client Honored at ESPY Awards

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Nearly two years ago, we reported on pro bono client Dewey Bozella's release from prison after his 26-year incarceration for a murder he did not commit. On October 28, 2009, in the presence of television cameras and photographers, Bozella's shackles were removed and he walked out of the courtroom a free man. Today, what began as a pro bono case for the firm in 2007 has developed into a strong and lasting relationship between Bozella and our attorneys.

Last evening, Bozella received the Arthur Ashe Courage Award—joining such past recipients as Muhammad Ali, Billie Jean King and Nelson Mandela—at ESPN's 2011 ESPY Awards. The Ashe Award is bestowed upon an individual who exemplifies courage in life, off the field. Throughout his incarceration, Bozella maintained his innocence, even when offered several plea bargains, including one that would have resulted in his immediate release from custody.

Before he was wrongfully convicted, Bozella was a talented boxer who once attended a camp run by world heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson. In prison, boxing became an outlet for Bozella. After becoming involved in the prison boxing system, he was named champion of Sing Sing Correctional Facility and was so talented that the prison once brought in a Golden Gloves champion to fight him. Of course, Bozella held his own. Boxing also helped Bozella focus on achieving a number of milestones while in prison, including receiving his bachelor's and master's degrees.

Following his release, Bozella obtained employment at RECAP, a nonprofit that helps individuals recently released from prison readjust to society. He also volunteers at the Newburgh Boxing Club in New York State, training young men who are pursuing boxing careers. ESPN learned of Bozella's efforts in the community and, after meeting Bozella and the WilmerHale team—which includes New York-based Partner Peter Macdonald and Senior Associates Ross Firsenbaum and Shauna Friedman—recognized the importance of his story.

[Watch his ESPYs acceptance speech.](#)