



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sherpa Sports AI and CK1 LLC Form Strategic Partnership to Deliver a Complete Operating System for the Modern Athletic Department

Connect Every System in Your Front and Back Office.

HOUSTON, Texas and PITTSBURGH, Pennsylvania, September 1, 2026 — Sherpa Sports AI and CK1 LLC today announced a strategic partnership that brings together Sherpa Sports AI's AI-powered Sports Intelligence Platform and CK1's operator-led executive advisory and AI strategy. Sherpa Sports AI leads the AI front office. CK1 leads the AI back office. Together the two firms provide athletic organizations one complete operating system built for the modern athletic department.

Sherpa Sports AI is the Sports Intelligence Platform, a unified, AI-powered system that brings together scouting, recruiting, NIL management, professional contracts, financial operations, and compliance in one secure platform for college athletic departments, professional teams, and sports agencies. The platform is organized around four integrated modules: Scouting and Recruiting, covering the prospect pipeline from first look to enrollment; NIL and Pro Contracts, managing the deal lifecycle from term sheet to executed contract; Financial Operations, delivering real-time budget intelligence across departments; and Compliance, Workflow and Insights, with automated NCAA compliance monitoring and a full audit trail on every action. An AI intelligence layer runs across all four modules, and an open API connects the tools an organization already uses, from video platforms and scouting systems to payroll and CRM. Sherpa Sports AI is SOC 2 Type II certified and FERPA and NCAA compliant.

CK1 brings the operating model and the AI strategy that sits behind it. CK1's approach is data-readiness first, and its internal services are delivered to clients in four packages. Strategic Foundation covers strategic advisory and operational planning, data readiness assessment, data architecture and readiness structuring, and financial projections and ROI modeling. Governance and Enablement covers AI literacy, education and training, AI governance and responsible-AI policy, and AI operations and road mapping. Implementation and Automation covers use-case design and prioritization, AI implementation and automation, and AI change management and adoption. The Athletic Department Operating System is the integrated build the first three packages lead to, wrapped by ongoing strategic advisory on the back end.

Under the partnership, Sherpa Sports AI will provide engineering and product development for CK1's back-office systems, and CK1 will provide AI advisory and consulting to Sherpa Sports AI. The two firms will refer clients to one another and go to market together. Both companies remain independently owned and operated, and each retains full ownership of its own intellectual property and technology. The arrangement is a commercial and go-to-market relationship.

"The new era of sports demands a new operating model. Before we talk about AI, we help you organize the operational data AI would need to be useful. Then we use that data to build executive intelligence around revenue, budget pressure, compliance workload, and risk. That is the back office. What DJ has built at Sherpa Sports AI is the front office, and it is the platform I spent 17 years in the Division I Athletic Director chair wishing existed. I partnered with DJ because he built the sports intelligence platform the right way, with compliance and security designed into the workflow, and because our two halves fit together without overlapping. He knows AI at a product development and engineering level. I know how these organizations run day to day. Connect the two and an athletics organization has a complete operating system."

CHRIS KING, FOUNDER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, CK1 LLC

"CK1 was the right partner for Sherpa Sports AI because Chris brings 17 years of Division I athletic director leadership and a deep understanding of how athletic organizations operate. Sherpa Sports AI provides the AI and technology infrastructure; CK1 brings the operational expertise. A well-structured back office connects financial, revenue, compliance, administrative, and performance data, giving leaders clearer visibility and faster decision-making. Together, both halves operate on one intelligence layer, creating a complete operating system for modern sports organizations that connects every critical decision across the entire organization."

DARRICK "DJ" JOHNSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SHERPA SPORTS AI

The combined offer is designed to provide organizations with one connected data layer from the signed deal to the ledger to the board report, executive intelligence built on operational data already structured to support it, and compliance visibility that runs inside daily workflow. Sherpa Sports AI integrates with the systems an organization already uses, and CK1 layers its operating model above them, so departments gain capability while keeping the investments they have made.

Joint engagements are available now. The firms are offering a combined front-office and back-office assessment as the entry point, delivered as a single engagement with both companies participating. Athletic departments, professional franchises, conferences, and agencies can contact either firm directly to experience the future of sports intelligence.

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ABOUT SHERPA SPORTS AI

Sherpa Sports AI is a Sports Intelligence Platform that brings scouting, recruiting, NIL management, professional contracts, financial operations, and compliance workflows together in one secure, AI-powered system. Built by a team with experience across sports and enterprise technology, Sherpa Sports AI is designed around how college athletic departments, professional teams, sports agencies, and elite high school programs actually operate. Its unified intelligence layer and open API connect data from video, payroll, CRM, scouting, and other operational tools. Sherpa Sports AI currently supports a growing customer base of up to 15 sports organizations and is approved for use across men's and women's sports. Learn more at sherpasports.ai.

ABOUT CK1 LLC

The new era of sports demands a new operating model. CK1 LLC partners with collegiate athletic departments, professional sports franchises, and sports business leaders to stabilize operations, unlock revenue, and deploy modern technology frameworks in a complex, data-driven landscape. Founded by Chris King, a 30-year Division I executive, former Division I Director of Athletics, and two-time NACDA Athletic Director of the Year, CK1 delivers operator-led advisory, strategic planning, and AI strategy across three pillars: revenue, operations, and technology. Services include enterprise athletics assessments, revenue generation and capital strategy, fiscal stewardship and operational review, four AI service packages (Strategic Foundation, Governance and Enablement, Implementation and Automation, and the Athletic Department Operating System), institutional alignment, and fractional executive advisory. Learn more at ck1llc.com.

MEDIA CONTACTS

SHERPA SPORTS AI

Darrick "DJ" Johnson, Chief Executive Officer
Houston, Texas
info@sherpaclouds.com
sherpasports.ai · [@sherpasportsai](https://twitter.com/sherpasportsai)
linkedin.com/in/darrick-dj-johnson-li

CK1 LLC

Chris King, Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
king@ck1llc.com
ck1llc.com · [@ChrisKingAD](https://twitter.com/ChrisKingAD) · [@ck1_llc](https://twitter.com/ck1_llc)
linkedin.com/in/chris-king-bb177621