



A WINNING RECORD

In the pros, in university athletics departments, in classrooms, in business offices, in law firms, and elsewhere yet, the Marquette lawyers who participated in the school's sports law program are building vibrant careers.

By Alan J. Borsuk

Mahmood (Momo) Abdellatif grew up just outside of Atlanta. A big sports fan, he wanted a career connected to sports, even if he wasn't going to be an athlete.



Mahmood (Momo) Abdellatif

He got his undergraduate degree from Berry College, a small private liberal arts college in northwest Georgia. In the mid-2010s, he followed developments on the Atlanta sports scene, particularly construction of Truist Park, a new baseball stadium for the Atlanta Braves, and Mercedes-Benz Stadium, now home of the Atlanta Falcons.

Abdellatif told himself that there must be a lot of lawyers involved in the stadium projects. A career goal formed: He wanted a career along the lines of those lawyers.

On March 31, 2017, when Truist Park opened, the people who played central roles in making it a reality were introduced on the field. "That was pretty surreal and pretty neat," recalled Greg Heller. "Professionally, that was a highlight." As executive vice president and chief legal officer of the Atlanta Braves, he had earned his place in the spotlight.

Heller and Abdellatif don't know each other. But in an important way, they are linked. The career path of one and the career possibilities of the other both are tied to Marquette Law School, its nationally renowned sports law program, and the work of the National Sports Law Institute, part of the Law School.

Heller, L'96, goes back to a time when the National Sports Law Institute was housed separately from the Law School, and Martin Greenberg, L'71, a full-time Milwaukee lawyer with a strong interest in sports and part-time member of the Marquette law faculty, was spearheading the rise of the program. Heller became assistant team counsel of the Atlanta Braves in 2000 and general counsel in 2007. "My run is anything and everything legal," he said. The projects to construct the baseball stadium and the Battery Atlanta, a large adjacent entertainment district, are among the top accomplishments in which Heller has played a role.

And, for his part, Abdellatif is now in his third year at Marquette Law School. His interest in the law, sports, and efforts that benefit the general public led him from Georgia to Marquette. Following a summer clerkship at the Milwaukee law firm of Godfrey & Kahn, he was offered, and accepted, a full-time position with the firm's corporate team after graduation. He continues to have a special hope: that, at some future point, "I will be working with organizations to develop sports facilities," he said, especially in places around the world where poverty is high and opportunities for recreation are not good.

Successful pasts, rewarding presents, paths to good futures—all three are central to determining whether any higher education program is successful. Marquette's sports law program stands on all three. We offer here profiles of a few Marquette lawyers and current students. It's far from a comprehensive look at people who have benefited from, or who contribute to, Marquette Law School and its sports law specialty. But their stories help illustrate the history, current work, and direction of the program.



Aurusa Kabani

CHAPTER 1 Team Orlando

In the spring of 2018, the Law School was getting ready to host an event for potential sports law students. Paul Anderson, director of the school's National Sports Law Institute, asked **Aurusa Kabani**, then a second-year law student, to help by picking up one of the main speakers from the airport. What Kabani did not know was that Anderson had more in mind than a ride—he wanted Kabani to meet the speaker, **Nyea Sturman**, L'03, vice president and general counsel of the Orlando Magic NBA basketball team.

On the drive to campus, Sturman and Kabani struck up a conversation beyond their careers. For one thing, each of them has a deep love for travel. That evening, they talked for hours about their travels, families, and even the weather, Kabani recalled. "We built an immediate friendship on passions other than sports." By the end of Sturman's visit, she had given Kabani her contact information and asked her to stay in touch.



On the basketball court of the Orlando Magic (from left) are Andre Salhab, Nyea Sturman, Danez Marrable Lockhart, and Mario Harmon.

Image by Gary Bassing

They did. Sturman became a mentor for the student. Kabani, L'19, applied to the Magic for an internship for lawyers who had recently completed law school. Sturman took herself out of the interview process, and Kabani met with Andre Salhab, associate counsel for the Magic—and a 2012 sports law graduate from Marquette. After rounds of interviews, Kabani got the internship. She said it was the best way for her to gain practical experience in drafting agreements, understanding risks, handling negotiations in the sports world, and similar matters.

Looking to her next step, Kabani was in regular contact with the general counsel of the Orlando City Soccer Club, which has both a Major League Soccer team and a National Women's Soccer League team. She attributed landing the role as director of legal affairs for the club in June 2020 to what she learned interning under the Magic's legal team. "They helped build the very foundation where my career in sports has an opportunity to thrive." She has a long-term interest in getting involved in international sports, and the club frequently hosts soccer events involving teams from around the globe, which means, Kabani said, "my world stage has already begun."

Building relationships. Making connections. Joining informal as well as formal networks. These are keys to success for a sports team. And they're keys to success for the Marquette sports law program, known for the way many Marquette lawyers help current students get launched into careers.

Nyea Sturman, whom we have already mentioned, is a good example of a team builder. She's involved in a lot of teams. Four of them are actual sports teams. As vice president and general counsel, she is involved not only with the Magic but also with three teams connected to the Magic: the Lakeland Magic G-League basketball team, based in Lakeland, Fla.; the Orlando Solar Bears, an ECHL hockey team; and Magic Gaming, the NBA 2K League e-sports team.

But another team—her Marquette sports law team—also is important to Sturman. "We have an all-Marquette legal services department right now," she said. In addition to herself and Salhab, it includes Danez Marrable Lockhart, L'03, and a new addition, Mario Harmon, L'20, who was named this past September to be the legal services graduate associate for the Magic. In a broader sense, Marquette's Orlando sports law team also includes Kabani, who remains close with Sturman and other team members, Stephanie Galvin, L'14, who worked as a legal intern for the Magic before

taking a position with the Miami Marlins baseball team for five and a half years, and Jessica Goldstein, L'17, who interned with the Magic before going into private practice. Galvin recently joined Legends, a large provider of services to professional sports teams, based in Dallas.

Sturman has chosen her legal team not out of loyalty to Marquette but based on the caliber of who they are as people and as attorneys. She is proud of the work her colleagues do, proud of the growth of the Magic's legal department as the business itself has grown, and proud of the other careers she has boosted.

But Sturman does feel loyalty to Marquette, based on her own law school experiences and subsequent success. Like many sports law alums, she stays in touch not only with law school friends but also with Paul Anderson, the sports law program leader known to many students and alums by the initials "PA," and National Sports Law Institute Executive Director Matt Mitten. Sturman frequently takes part in programs for current students.

"I continue to try to pay it forward to the next generation of Marquette sports law alums," Sturman said. "Marquette gave us the foundation through not only coursework and the study of the law but also the exposure to sports industries, both from academic and practical hands-on perspectives."

Sturman grew up north of New York City. She was involved in varsity sports in high school and in college at Cornell University, where she majored in industrial and labor relations. She also had an interest in becoming a lawyer but didn't want to practice criminal law as her father did. Something that combined the law and sports—that's what she wanted.

She took every course she could in college that involved sports, and especially labor relations in sports. At the time, in the 1990s, major professional sports leagues had gone through tumultuous labor disputes. Labor law, labor history, and labor economics courses appealed to her, and she applied the content to sports whenever she could for papers and projects.

When it came to looking for a law school, her research led her to Marquette, even though she had no other connections to the school or Wisconsin. It worked out well, including internships with the Milwaukee Bucks basketball team and the Pettit National Ice Center in Milwaukee.

After completing law school, Sturman earned a master's degree in business administration at the University of Oregon, with a certificate in sports business. As soon as she graduated, she got a job offer from the Magic. There wasn't an in-house

legal team at the time. But legal needs grew, and “bit by bit, the legal aspect of my job became more significant” until she ultimately was tasked with co-founding the organization’s legal department, which she has led for the past nine years.

Andre Salhab’s mother was from Trinidad and his father from Grenada. He was born in New York, and for most of his childhood, the family lived in Florida.

How did he end up in Milwaukee? He attended the University of Florida and majored in public relations with minors in theatre and leadership. Regardless of what he did as an undergrad, Salhab always had known he wanted to be a lawyer, though which field of law was a question mark. He decided that he wanted to focus on sports or entertainment law, two areas for which he always had a passion. So how did he choose Marquette? “I did not know anything about Marquette,” but he received a pamphlet about Marquette Law School and its sports law program. “The more I looked into what the program had to offer, the more I could envision myself there.” The rest is history.

He gives a special shout-out to Stephanie Nikolay, Marquette Law School’s longtime director of admissions and recruitment, who helped him in 2009 with questions about moving to Milwaukee and other needs. “She was so welcoming,” Salhab said. “It was Stephanie who really sold it.” And his girlfriend (now wife) agreed to the move so long as they could bring along their dog and he promised they would move back to Florida after graduation.

What did Salhab say was one of the most important things he learned during his time at Marquette? “I am sure Marquette law students have heard it at least once or twice, but network, network, network,” Salhab remarked as he laughed. And network he did.

His mother had worked for Disney in Orlando for many years. Over the years, he used this as an opportunity to meet a number of Disney attorneys in an effort to learn and network as much as possible. After his second year in law school, Salhab got a summer legal internship with the Disney Vacation Club. He worked there after graduating from Marquette in 2012, and in 2013 he had the opportunity to move into a role in the business affairs department at Disney’s ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex.

How did he get that opportunity? You guessed it—networking. Then, in 2017, the Law School’s Anderson sent

him a notice that the Orlando Magic had an opening for an associate counsel. Salhab applied and, after a rigorous interview process, was offered and accepted the role. Salhab has been with the team since.

“Working for an NBA team is not an easy thing,” Salhab said. “It’s a demanding job, but it truly is a rewarding experience, especially when you get to work with an amazing team.” But even amid the stress, he said he loves the work and the value he can bring to the team. “We are the one-stop shop for all things legal, and each and every day is a new adventure,” he said.

Danez Marrable Lockhart has always had a wide range of interests, including an early interest in becoming a lawyer. She grew up in Michigan and Ohio. During her senior year at Ohio University, she worked in the athletics department. The experience led her to decide to pursue a career in sports law. She stayed at Ohio to earn a master’s degree in athletics administration. Marquette, with its sports law program, was her choice for law school.

While in law school, Lockhart’s many involvements included interning with the Milwaukee Bucks, clerking for Foley & Lardner, and working for a boutique tax and entertainment law firm. She also volunteered in the Law School’s family-law self-help clinic and served as director of the Midwest region of the National Black Law Students Association.

After law school, she worked for athletics departments at universities in South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama, including positions involving compliance and life-skills/student-athlete development. Lockhart also directed a professional development institute through the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics. She moved in 2013 to Orlando, where her husband worked. Lockhart transitioned into working in professional sports, including the continuing education program for the NFL.

Lockhart was a classmate of Sturman at Marquette, and they stayed in touch. In 2017, when an opportunity to join the Magic’s legal department arose, Lockhart was selected. The position combines her love of sports and the law and allows her to balance work with the two things she values the most: faith and family, including her young child.

Stephanie Galvin was about 14 when she knew that she wanted to be a lawyer. It was only some years later that she found out that there were lawyers



Stephanie Galvin



IN THE ON-DECK CIRCLE LOGAN DEENEY

Internships are an important experience for many students in the Marquette Law School sports law program. Logan Deeney has had two internships that taught him a lot: one in the compliance office of the

Northwestern University athletic department in Evanston, Ill., and one in the United Soccer League office in Tampa, Fla.

To be accurate, though, neither internship was actually in Evanston or Tampa. In line with so many other things during the coronavirus pandemic, both were done virtually. That didn't keep Deeney from getting the most out of them, just as he has gotten the most out of the pandemic-shaped twists of his first two years in law school. As he put it, he hasn't known what a "normal" year is, given all that has happened since March of his first law school year.

There have been some upsides to the pandemic's impact, Deeney said. With two young children at home in Milwaukee, doing an internship in person in Tampa might not have worked. On the other hand, Deeney said, doing an internship from home with young children around has taught him flexibility and how to use time effectively.

Both Deeney and his wife grew up in Billings, Montana, and attended college in California. When it came to a career path, Deeney wanted something that combined a pair of his big interests: sports and law. He researched where the two could come together, focused on Marquette, and, after a pair of visits to Milwaukee, made a choice that has worked out well for him, even amid the pandemic.

Now in his third year in law school, Deeney is a candidate for a sports law certificate and is part of a team representing Marquette this fall at the National Sports Law Negotiation Competition in San Diego, Calif. He is also interning in the office of the general counsel for Marquette University.

Deeney said that beyond academic content, the law school experience had taught him to get out of some of his comfort zones and how to step forward more. Plus there have been those lessons about work-life balance, amplified by the pandemic's impact. "I couldn't ask for a better experience," Deeney said.

who worked in the sports world. It was then that she set a goal to become one of those lawyers.

Galvin grew up in Vancouver, Canada, and majored in business at the University of British Columbia. When she started to apply to law schools, she had no idea where Wisconsin was. But her research on law schools led her to focus on Marquette and its sports law program. "What really got me was the network of alumni who were out there working in jobs that I wanted, in the industry that I wanted to be in," she said.

She immersed herself in developing her career possibilities. In three years, she got a law degree and a master's in business administration, also from Marquette, and she served as the editor-in-chief of the *Marquette Sports Law Review*. She also took on numerous internships, including with the Charlotte Hornets (NBA), the Milwaukee Brewers (MLB), the National Labor Relations Board, Wisconsin Court of

Appeals, and a boutique sports law firm in Chicago. (While studying at Marquette, she also met her now husband—another Marquette lawyer.)

"I wanted to make myself a candidate that somebody couldn't say 'No' to," she said. "I tried to do as much as I could in the time that I had at Marquette, so that when an opportunity arose, they couldn't turn me away."

After completing law school in 2014, she was hired by a small law firm in San Diego led by a Marquette lawyer. Then—here's that name again—Nyea Sturman, who had been a mentor to Galvin, had an opening, and after multiple conversations and interviews, offered Galvin a post-grad legal internship with the Magic. It was for one year, but Galvin thought, "I believe in myself. I know that when I get there, I'll prove myself and make something happen. I just need a chance."

Sturman gave her that chance and Galvin was right. She subsequently joined the legal department of the Miami

Marlins (MLB). After five and a half successful years as the Marlins' associate general counsel, she took a position in 2021 with Legends, a premium experience company that provides a multitude of services to sports franchises, entertainment companies, and venues. Galvin is the director of business and legal affairs for Legends' Hospitality and Global Merchandise divisions. As she characterizes the work, "We are a one-stop shop. The specific services provided depend on the client. But Legends is able to assist with almost anything a sports team or entertainment company needs."

"I've been fortunate in the opportunities that have come up," Galvin said. "With every opportunity, I continually try to do my best and enjoy the moment. I really couldn't ask for more at this point in my career." And, yes, she still stays in touch with Sturman and with the Law School's Paul Anderson. She calls them "amazing mentors and friends." >>



IN THE ON-DECK CIRCLE
MORGAN HINES

When Morgan Hines started at Marquette Law School in fall 2019, Paul Anderson, director of the sports law program, gave her three pieces of advice: Show up. Volunteer. Be involved. Morgan is a self-starter. “I always do as much as I can.” Following Anderson’s advice has not been hard for her.

Hines grew up in Milwaukee and went to the University of Wisconsin-Madison for her undergraduate education. She considered going to law schools on either coast for an academic, social, and professional experience beyond Wisconsin. But, after meeting with Anderson in 2018, she said, “I told him, ‘Marquette is the place for me.’” She added, “He believed in me as a student. He wanted to see me excel. He was genuine.” She went to an event for admitted students in spring 2019 that allowed her to meet sports law students and alums. “It’s really like a big family—we’re here to support you.”

After the death of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer in May 2020, Hines told Anderson that there needed to be discussions among students “to bring us together, address broad issues, and allow us to share how students feel and what we are experiencing.” That day, the Sports Law Diversity and Inclusion Committee was born, and Anderson “voluntold” Hines to be the chair. Since then, groups of students have been meeting with alums and organizations to learn more about the issues and the direct impact of those issues on individuals of diverse backgrounds.

Hines is also involved in the Black Law Students Association, and she is a student liaison for the Milwaukee Bar Association and a program mentor to other law students. “I’m a person who volunteers for things,” she said.

In the summer of 2021, Hines worked at the Milwaukee office of a large national law firm specializing in health law. She expects to graduate in May 2022 and has already accepted a position. Hines is energetically focused on writing her own success story.

is, and they’re able to make good decisions about their actions.”

A second component of compliance, she said, is to monitor what’s going on. From recruiting to how long practices can be to a wealth of dos and don’ts for coaches, there is much to oversee—and this now comes amid many changes around college sports.

Given all the rules, the third component of Bray’s work is enforcement, including what to do when someone violates a rule, whether major or minor, intentionally or inadvertently. Often that means involvement with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) compliance officials.

Compliance has grown as an important component of what college athletic departments need and as a career focus of many graduates of Marquette Law School. Let us consider, as examples, both Bray and Brent Moberg of the University of Notre Dame, two Marquette lawyers who are making their marks in this field.

Bray grew up in Ohio and then Texas. She was involved in several sports as an athlete and got a bachelor’s degree from Texas A&M with a major in sports management. She set a goal of going to law school, and Marquette became her choice. Things worked out well, not only for what she did at Eckstein Hall, but for what she learned in internships in the Marquette athletics department and elsewhere.

After her second year in law school, she worked during the summer in the athletic department at Texas Christian University. “That was really an eye opener for me,” Bray said, and it settled a question in her mind whether she should aim to work in professional sports or college sports. An internship during her third year in law school with the University of Wisconsin-Madison athletics department firmed up her preference for college.

Getting her first position after completing law school in 2014 was not easy. Bray applied for 34 jobs and had 26 interviews before a position at Yale University popped up. It was intended to be a two-year internship in compliance with the athletic department, but she decided to take a chance on it. When her supervisor left, she was asked to do the compliance work solo. With help from others, including peers in other Ivy League universities, she did well. She was promoted to assistant athletic director and was given a position required by the NCAA of “senior woman administrator,” which meant Bray became involved in Title IX compliance, gender equity matters, and, in general, making sure women had seats at the table for a wide range of decisions related to

CHAPTER 2

The Complicated World of Compliance

Christian Bray, L’14, thinks of herself first as an educator. Her job as associate athletics director at Harvard University carries a range of duties, from liaison work with academic departments to advocacy for women athletes. But her primary job is compliance. That may sound somewhat heavy, given the need to enforce the large volume of rules around college athletics.

But Bray puts the work in a positive light: “Most important, we educate. We create an atmosphere where coaches and athletes know what they can and can’t do. They know where the line



Christian Bray

sports at Yale. She also oversaw some specific sports programs, including volleyball and gymnastics.

In 2018, Bray moved to Harvard, where she is associate director of athletics, with a focus on compliance. She also works on “academic integration” for student athletes and is a liaison for the athletic department with other parts of the university, including the office of the general counsel. As at Yale, she has been given the position of senior woman administrator.

As prestigious as the Yale and Harvard names are, they have comparatively small athletic staffs. Bray said many people interested in legal compliance work want to be part of programs of the “Power 5” athletic conferences. She suggests that “mid-major” programs may offer ripe opportunities to grow professionally. She is a good example of how that is so.

Brent Moberg, L’04, is an example of someone who has made a successful career focused on compliance at an athletic powerhouse—in fact, one of the most famous names in college sports, Notre Dame. How he arrived there is complicated.



Brent Moberg

Moberg grew up in Rockford, Illinois, and enrolled as an undergrad at Notre Dame, with intentions of being a doctor. But early in his senior year, “I had a pretty life-altering event happen,” as he put it. Without warning, he suffered a traumatic brain injury, similar to a massive hemorrhage. He said doctors did not expect him to survive or expected his brain function would not recover in full. “A lot of very amazing things happened to me,” he said. The Notre Dame community united in ways that included prayer gatherings and banners all around campus drawing attention to his situation. And he recovered, despite the medical forecasts.

After completing his undergraduate work a year behind his original schedule, Moberg enrolled in a medical school in Illinois. “It just never felt right,” he said. He took the LSAT and applied to law schools, including Marquette. “I had no idea Marquette had a sports law program,” he said. “That was completely news to me when I decided to go to Marquette.”

But he chose Marquette and during orientation, he heard people saying they came for sports law. “That was the first I had heard of sports law,” Moberg said. But he went to an alumni career panel, “just trying to keep my options open.”

One of the speakers was Keith Miller, L’01, then a lawyer working in athletic compliance at the University of Southern California (and now associate athletic director for compliance at Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi). Moberg found it interesting. He subsequently went to an NCAA seminar in Chicago on the subject. Miller was there and introduced Moberg to other practitioners involved in NCAA compliance. Moberg took every opportunity in law school to learn about the subject, including through internships ranging from South Milwaukee High School to a minor league baseball team (at the AAA level) to the Marquette University athletics department.

In his first internship, Moberg worked for Shawn Eichorst, L’95, then athletic director at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Eichorst went on to leading positions in athletic departments at several universities and is now a consultant on intercollegiate sports matters—and has been a mentor to Moberg.

After completing law school and receiving an M.B.A. degree from Marquette, Moberg was hired in 2006 as director of compliance at Northern Illinois University. In 2009, he was hired for similar work at Notre Dame. His biggest task is to oversee recruiting for all 26 sports the university offers. Each person working in compliance works with specific teams, athletics units, and university offices on compliance issues. For Moberg, the teams are men’s basketball, hockey, men’s lacrosse, women’s golf, and women’s tennis. Also among his duties, he coordinates and manages the compliance office’s internship and externship programs.

Moberg said, “Some of the best advice I ever got [early on at Marquette] is that, where possible, the answer should never be ‘No.’” When coaches or athletes come to him with an issue, the goal is to find ways to do things right. Sometimes that means telling them that they can’t do it the way they might like but then offering alternatives that might come close. That builds trust and relationships, he said.

Moberg also works with colleges and universities as a consultant for CarrSports Consulting on issues such as strategic planning, addition of sports, and changing the NCAA division in which institutions compete.

“I still do enjoy compliance an awful lot,” he said. And he connects his career success strongly to his time at Marquette Law School. “I never in a million years would have imagined the doors and the pathways and the relationships that have been opened up for me,” Moberg said. “Nothing happens without Marquette; nothing happens without Paul Anderson.” ▶▶

CHAPTER 3

From Student to Teacher

Kerri Cebula, L'06, grew up in a family of car-racing fans. Now she is a professor teaching sports law, with a research specialty involving Formula One cars.

But the path to being an expert who talks often with professional auto-racing insiders (“they like to gossip like little children”) had unexpected twists. A big one was the fact that Marquette played Villanova in basketball on November 15, 2002. (Marquette won 73–61 at Madison Square Garden in New York, although that’s not relevant to this recollection.) Let us explain.

At that point in her career, Cebula was working in the athletics department of Villanova University and was involved in compliance work, although she was not a lawyer. The NCAA launched an investigation into allegations of earlier violations involving the university’s basketball recruiting. Cebula said one incident involved a coach who arranged for recruits to have lunch at a Philadelphia-area cheese steak restaurant. The coach was in the restaurant. Under the rules, he was not allowed to have contact with the recruits at that point. He didn’t speak with them, but he was alleged to have made eye contact, which investigators thought was a violation.

As the university dealt with this, Cebula said she was part of an hour-and-a-half-long meeting discussing whether eye contact constituted an NCAA violation. “I walked out of that meeting and said, ‘That’s it—I’m going to law school,’” she recalled. She looked at the Villanova men’s basketball schedule and researched which schools had a sports law program. The answer was Marquette.

Cebula had no prior contacts with Marquette or Milwaukee, but she ended up enrolling. “I went purely for the sports law program,” she said. “It worked out very well, obviously. It was a great education.” She built relationships that she maintains now, and she got on track for a career teaching sports law at the college level.

Since 2012, she has been associate professor of sport management at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, an 8,000-student state university about 70 miles northwest of Philadelphia. She teaches courses including sports management,



Kerri Cebula

sports law (within the College of Business), and professional sports governance.

And then there is her legal research into auto racing. Her focus is on trade secrets, mostly related to engine design. Many aspects of Formula One cars involve trade secrets, she said, and people are adamant about protecting them. The last several years have seen several major disputes. This, of course, makes Cebula’s work more relevant and, for her, more fun.

Cebula said her Marquette sports law credentials have been an asset throughout her academic career. “When people hear that, the prestige goes up,” she said. “People say, ‘Oh, you know what you’re talking about.’”

“I will be forever grateful for whoever scheduled Marquette versus Villanova that year,” Cebula said. “The education that I got was phenomenal.”

Mark Dodds, L'05, was successful in his sports marketing job. But he had what he called “a mini-midlife crisis” after several years. He liked the work, but. . . . He knew one of the things he liked most was teaching new employees about sports marketing. “I thought, if that’s what I like to do, I should do that.” And so he has.



Mark Dodds

Dodds grew up in upstate New York and graduated from Syracuse University with a business degree in marketing. He got an M.B.A. with a concentration in sports marketing from Robert Morris University near Pittsburgh.

He got a good job with GMR, a large and well-regarded sports marketing agency based in New Berlin, Wisconsin. His work included involvement with regulatory compliance for some of the company’s clients. That got him interested in sports law—and he knew that Marquette Law School, with its sports law program, was nearby. While still working at GMR, Dodds began taking law school courses.

He said he gained a lot from his law school experience, but he never wanted to be a lawyer in practice. He credits Marquette professors, including Matt Mitten, executive director of the National Sports Law Institute, and Paul Anderson, with teaching him how to teach. Since shortly after graduating in 2005, he has taught at the State University of New York-Cortland, south of Syracuse. Along the way, he also received a Ph.D. in marketing from the University of Jyväskylä in Finland.



IN THE ON-DECK CIRCLE

CAYLA MCNEIL

Cayla McNeil remembers vividly one day when she was taking an undergraduate class in sports law at Otterbein University near Columbus, Ohio. That day, the class had a guest speaker. She was a Black woman, a judge, and a powerful speaker. Awed, McNeil went to her professor after class and asked if she thought McNeil was qualified to go to law school. The professor said, “Yes.”

For McNeil, growing up in suburbs of Detroit and then going off to college, sports had been a big part of her life. She played lacrosse at Otterbein, but an injury ended her competitive days. “I really had to get out of fantasyland and think about what I want to do after sports,” she said. Becoming a lawyer appealed to her. She did an internship in the office of a family friend who was a lawyer in Nashville, Tenn., and was impressed with the connection between lawyers and clients. “I just fell in love with that relationship and the commitment you have to your clients,” she said.

A chance to job shadow with the Columbus Blue Jackets professional hockey team and intern in the University of Detroit Mercy athletics department firmed up McNeil’s interest in sports law and put her on a path to Marquette.

Now in her second year in law school, she has become active with the Black Law Students Association and the school’s Sports Law Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Over the summer, she had a virtual legal internship with Nike, “a company that I’ve dreamed about all my life.” She was pleased with how she handled the internship’s demands.

McNeil wants to pursue a career that includes involvement in social activism among athletes. McNeil said, “It’s been an exciting time to be alive in the past five years because we see athlete activism on big stages. . . . Athletes have been using their platforms to start demanding a change in the culture and to promote a better culture of inclusivity.” She added, “That’s something I really want to work on in my career.”

As he hoped, Dodds has found teaching rewarding. “I like to talk to the students, I like to present the material, I like to get their feedback,” he said. He teaches sports law, but the actual content of his courses covers a lot more, Dodds said. That includes teaching about the way the legal system as a whole works, and side trips into many hot subjects. Dodds said, “Sports is a gateway to discuss things that people otherwise might not be talking about.”

Dodds said that other sports law professors around the country who are Marquette lawyers are key colleagues in his professional circle. For years, they have met frequently at conferences, collaborated in writing academic pieces, and just been a friendly peer group. “The Marquette mafia,” he jokes. “That’s probably my closest network.”

CHAPTER 4 In the Big Leagues

Consider two lessons from the career path of **Jessica Boddy, L’06**.

The first: Pursuing big goals can pay off, but it sometimes involves patience. “I’ve always wanted to work for the NFL,” Boddy said. Since spring 2021, she has been doing that, as vice president/head of business affairs



Jessica Boddy

for NFL Films. Fulfilling that goal came after 14 years of working in roles that she really enjoyed. But nothing could compare to landing her NFL dream job.

The second: She wasn’t hired for her knowledge of sports or sports law. While at Marquette Law School, she took a course in intellectual property law. “From that class, I developed an interest in intellectual property,” Boddy said. She turned her interest into an area of expertise. With over 13 years at the media conglomerate Discovery, Inc., she developed a wealth of knowledge and experience in media production, rights, and distribution, all of which were big pluses when she applied for the NFL job.

Boddy is one of several Marquette lawyers who have made it to the big leagues. They would agree it is cool.

(Greg Heller, executive vice president and chief legal officer of the Atlanta Braves, said, “If I ever have a rough day and try to complain to my wife, she says, ‘C’mon; you go to work at a ball field every day.” His office overlooks the playing field, and, for years, the office of baseball legend Henry Aaron was just down the hall. Heller said Aaron was “just a true gentleman—the nicest, sweetest man you ever could have met.”)

But these alumni have gotten where they are by working hard, doing good work, and sometimes getting breaks. ▶▶



Boddy—she was Jessica Jones in her law school days—grew up in Annapolis, Maryland, and went to Florida A&M in Tallahassee as an undergraduate. A sports enthusiast who wanted to be a lawyer, she said she chose Marquette for its comprehensive sports law program (and despite the winter weather).

She expected to take a job in the Milwaukee area when she completed law school in 2006, but her mother was ill in Maryland, so she moved back there to help. Her mother died nine months later, but Boddy stayed on, joining Discovery and developing her knowledge of business and media affairs. She also earned an M.B.A. from Temple University in 2018.

When corporate changes led Discovery to close its office in Silver Spring, Maryland, Boddy was offered a transfer to New York. She and her husband agreed to move, with a long-term goal of landing an opportunity in sports in New York. When the position with NFL Films was posted, she went after it, even knowing there was a drawback: the work is based in New Jersey, an hour-and-a-half commute from where Boddy, her husband, and six-year-old child live.

But, she said, “It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me; something I didn’t want to pass up.”

Boddy is responsible for traditional business affairs oversight for NFL Films, as well as exploring development and strategic opportunities for Films to grow. Day to day, she works closely with others on new content and opportunities and with league colleagues on various NFL initiatives, and she negotiates deals. She recently has taken a more active role in the NFL advancement of diversity and inclusion.

“It has been everything I desired since I first set out on a sports law journey,” she said.

Success in finding a major league job came more quickly for **Krista Brown**, L’15.

Brown grew up in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and went to the Winston-Salem State University as an undergrad. She was involved in several sports in high school and college. Midway through college, she set a goal of going to law school,



Krista Brown

knowing that sports law appealed to her. She didn’t know anything about Marquette except that NBA great Dwyane Wade had played college basketball there. But after looking into her options, she concluded that Marquette had a particularly robust sports law program.

Brown said that law school had one unexpected benefit: “It got me out of my shell a little bit.” She said, “Being on call in class [when a professor might call on a student to explain material] and that type of thing was a little jarring to me because I don’t particularly like to talk.” Getting involved in law journal work, curricular competitions, and other aspects of law school life furthered her personal growth. She said law school taught her how to stand up and explain things in front of others.

While in law school, Brown did an internship with the Milwaukee Brewers baseball team. Upon graduating in 2015, she applied for sports-related positions around the country. One was in the offices of Major League Baseball in New York City—and she got the job. She is now senior legal coordinator for MLB.

“Essentially, I draft agreements,” Brown said. “That is the majority of my job.” She works on product and sponsorships agreements, and is involved with work in the youth department, hiring trainers and umpires for youth events. “Every day is different; you never know what is going to come up,” she said. “Most days, someone will have questions—‘Can we do this?’ ‘Can we do that?’”

Many of the questions don’t directly involve what could be called sports issues. But then, Brown said, even if drafting a contract is similar across a wide range of client types, she likes that these contracts involve sports. And she gets involved in a wide range of legal needs—transactional law, intellectual property, youth protection, sometimes HIPAA or health privacy matters, because “all types of law converge on sports—that’s what I like the most.”

Greg Heller said that when he was starting out in the 1990s and was seeking a position involving sports law, the most common response he got was, “What is sports law? We don’t have a sports law practice.” He said that Marquette law professors, including Martin Greenberg and James T. Gray and Dean Frank DeGuire, were ahead of their time when they created the program in 1989.



Greg Heller

Now, he said, the field “has really exploded. . . . There is a ton of opportunity out there. It’s really phenomenal.” ▶▶



IN THE ON-DECK CIRCLE
QUINN STIGERS

Quinn Stigers grew up near Des Moines, Iowa, with a big interest in music. In school, she was strongly involved in choir and dance programs. She went to Iowa State University and majored in supply chain management in the business school. So how did she end up as the current editor-in-chief of the *Marquette Sports Law Review*?

She wanted to be a lawyer, with a specialty that combined her interest in entertainment with her strength in analytical thinking. The law surrounding all forms of entertainment is very similar, whether it is music or sports. All focus to large degrees on subjects such as contracts, intellectual property, and labor and employment. In short, a good sports law program is also good training for any form of entertainment law and for being a good lawyer more generally.

“That was what really sold me on Marquette,” with its depth of offerings in sports law, Stigers said. “I thought that would help me get into entertainment.”

Maybe it will. But Stigers has also found that she is interested in professional sports specifically, something enhanced by an internship with the Milwaukee Bucks, which she loved. Her involvement with the sports law review has been demanding, but worthwhile, she said, and it is the kind of role that appeals to potential employers.

Other avenues may lie ahead. Stigers interned during the summer of 2021 with the Milwaukee office of the large national firm of Husch Blackwell and will return after graduation to join its labor and employment practice group.

Stigers is optimistic about using her legal knowledge and skills to work on matters that appeal to her wide interests. And, she hopes, her career path will lead down the road to work involving professional sports.

When Heller completed law school in 1996, he got a job with an NBA agent who had a small law firm in Atlanta. That firm became part of a large Atlanta law firm, Powell Goldstein, and a former colleague of Heller at Powell Goldstein who was in-house at the then-thriving Turner Broadcasting and Turner Sports companies subsequently introduced Heller to Turner. At 29, Heller was hired to work in a three-person legal office at Turner that was handling major matters. “It was like a dream come true,” he said.

In 2007, when Turner sold off some of its ventures, including the Atlanta Braves, Heller became general counsel of the baseball team, later adding the role of executive vice president. Building the baseball stadium and the adjacent entertainment district, mentioned earlier, have been his two biggest projects.

“I’m sort of like the old, trusted advisor now,” Heller said. “My hair is all white now.” He said, “It’s been a good run. I wish I could freeze it. I wish I could slow down the clock.”

CHAPTER 5
**Sports Law Education,
Careers Outside Sports**

“I like to build things,” **Courtney Hall**, L’13, said. And she is doing that with New Source Medical, a growing health care equipment business based in Louisville, Kentucky. Like many sports law graduates of Marquette Law School, Hall is involved

in a legal practice that does not directly involve sports. In fact, a lot of her work doesn’t fit a narrow definition of legal work. She is involved in operations of the business, so much so that she was given the title of “chief operating officer”; for example, she gets involved in matters such as customer relations.

Hall is pleased with what she is doing, and she credits her sports law education with being an important ingredient in her success. As Marquette law professors have often said, being a good sports lawyer means being a good lawyer, and being a good lawyer can lead to a wide range of opportunities.

Hall grew up on a farm and in a small town in Kentucky. She fell in love with basketball and was good enough that she played for Mercer University in Macon, Ga., an NCAA Division I program.

But she wanted to study abroad, and that led to a semester at Oxford University in England, studying subjects ranging from international political economy to Jane Austen. “Jane Austen and Oxford was incredible,” she said. She considered law school in England, but realized that European Union employment rules were going to keep her from practicing there and that a British law degree wouldn’t help her in the United States.



Courtney Hall

So she headed back to the United States and began looking at law schools. The Kentuckian considered Marquette because “I’m a big basketball fan, and Louisville always played Marquette.” She had a bit to learn—she thought Marquette was in Pennsylvania. But Marquette’s sports law offerings appealed to her, and Eckstein Hall was beautiful, resolving her concerns about going to a boring law school in a dreary building.

Law school was challenging, she said, but rewarding. She was editor-in-chief of the *Marquette Sports Law Review*, and she interned with the Milwaukee Brewers while taking courses in subjects such as criminal law, business law, and family law.

After completing law school in 2013, Hall worked for a large law firm in Louisville. In 2014, she was hired by an entrepreneur, Kevin McKim, to join a small venture capital company. That led to her handling the legal side of the firm’s acquisition of a Florida health care equipment company, which was relaunched as New Source in 2016. Hall was one of the first employees, and soon her role expanded beyond legal work.

Her sports law background “has been huge” in helping her, Hall said. “My job would be a lot more difficult if I had not done it,” because she gained a breadth of information and skills.

Nathaniel St. Clair II, L’04, was well on his way to an excellent career as an electrical engineer when he met a patent lawyer. Now he has an excellent career as a lawyer in private practice in Dallas.



Nathaniel St. Clair II

That leaves a lot out of St. Clair’s dynamic life story. He grew up on the South Side of Chicago, excelled in academics and sports, got on track to learn engineering, turned down admission to MIT because he wanted to stay near family in the Midwest, and enrolled in the highly rated engineering program at the University of Michigan.

Before his junior year in college, he was interning for General Electric (GE) at a plant in Pennsylvania. In the course of observing and meeting people in different roles, he job-shadowed a patent lawyer. The work appealed to him. He developed the idea of going to law school and combining his engineering talent with a legal career.

He graduated from Michigan with a job offer from GE. St. Clair knew there was a GE operation in Waukesha, Wisconsin, still a short distance from family in Chicago. He could work there while going to Marquette Law School. And so it happened.

While in the sports law program at Marquette, he had an internship working for Ron Walter, then general counsel for the Milwaukee Bucks basketball team. St. Clair said that when he finished law school in 2004, his experiences with the Bucks and GE catapulted him into a position with the Foley & Lardner firm in Milwaukee, which included work with the sports law and intellectual property groups.

Much as he liked his time with Foley, after several years, he wanted to move to a new part of the country. He first worked at the firm of Jones Day and then, in 2013, joined Jackson Walker in the Dallas area, with a private practice that focuses on intellectual property law involving some of the nation’s largest corporations, especially financial institutions.

Along the way, St. Clair said, he spoke at a conference. A woman who heard him introduced herself and said she wanted him to help her son with some IP needs. It turned out her son was entertainer Kanye West, who was on the rise to super-stardom. St. Clair has also worked with other celebrity entertainers and athletes.

Pretty impressive, right? St. Clair said much of his success is built on the mentoring he got from people at Foley, including Sharon Barner, Joseph Ziebert, Jeanne Gills, and Walter. He was surrounded many times by “off-the-charts intelligent people,” St. Clair said, and he learned as much as he could from them. “Sometimes just being in the room and having the opportunities for exposure can predestine somebody’s success,” he said. “I can definitely say I had the opportunity as a result of my Marquette education and my Michigan education to be in the room.”

He said an important goal for him in coming years is to increase his efforts to mentor young lawyers. “Mentorship is tremendously important to me,” he said. “Without mentors in the legal practice, you don’t survive very long.”

Hassan Rahim, L’20, is at an early point on his career path, but has a similar goal to St. Clair’s: to be a mentor, to help young people, and to be someone whom “you can look at as a role model.” >>



Hassan Rahim



IN THE ON-DECK CIRCLE

PEYTON PHILLIPS

Peyton Phillips was asked, before the start of the fall 2021 semester, what his goals were for his second year in law school. To improve his study habits, he answered, and to get better at networking. The latter wasn't a strength of his, coming into law school. He got better at it in his first year, even amid the limitations that the pandemic imposed on interactions. He gives a big share of the credit to participating in sports law program events, particularly those in which alumni spoke with and answered students' questions.

Phillips grew up in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and got a bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota. Growing up, he played hockey and loved to watch sports. But he also loved reading and writing. He knew he wasn't going to be a professional hockey player, and he wanted to be a lawyer. Sports law, and specifically going to Marquette Law School for the sports law program, became his goal.

Obviously, the strengths he is developing in networking and similar skills aren't valuable only in work related to sports law. They will help him in whatever direction he goes. Phillips said his ideal career would involve working for a professional sports team or league. But an internship in the summer of 2021 with Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Ann Walsh Bradley suggests he will be ready to pursue other possible paths.

So far, law school has gone well, he said. But he has listened to the wisdom that the most important attribute of a good sports lawyer is to be a good lawyer, period. He appreciates also that a successful graduate of the sports law program may well end up in a good career that doesn't involve sports. Phillips said the leaders of Marquette's sports law program were providing good opportunities for students. He is readying himself to benefit from those opportunities.

When Rahim graduated from Marquette Law School, he joined a young nonprofit venture in Milwaukee called STRYV365 as finance and compliance manager, but also as an active part of the organization's efforts to help youths in Milwaukee deal with trauma and stress—or, as the organization's website puts it, to “equip youth with a resilient mindset through trauma-informed programming in education, athletics and activities.”

STRYV365 focuses its work on several Milwaukee high schools and colleges and has benefited from corporate sponsorships from businesses and nonprofits. The philanthropic fund of Bucks star Jrue Holiday and his wife, Lauren Holiday, a retired soccer star, has become a recent supporter.

Rahim grew up in North Carolina. The first Milwaukee sports star he rooted for was Marquette's Dwyane Wade, who went on to a superstar career in the NBA. (He has an autographed Wade jersey hanging on a wall in his office.) Rahim graduated from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and worked for the Charlotte Bobcats (now Hornets) in marketing.

His brother encouraged him to learn to be a sports agent, which developed into an interest in becoming a lawyer with an emphasis on sports, which led him to enroll at Marquette. He said that he built many strong relationships while a law student and became connected to Milwaukee.

A lot of great people are working on making Milwaukee a better place for young people, Rahim said. “I have no doubt there is hope for the city,” he said. And he intends to be part of seeing the hope realized.

CONCLUSION

“I'm really upping my mileage.”

Momo Abdellatif, the now-student who watched from the outside as the Truist baseball stadium was opened in Atlanta in 2017 and who set a goal of being on the inside of projects such as that, is a runner. When he was interviewed, he was training for a marathon. “I'm really upping my mileage right now,” he said.

So it is with marathons. So it is with law school. So it is with career goals. To succeed in each, you need to be committed to going the distance. You need determination. You need to use your talents well and make smart decisions about your path. You need to dream, but you need to do all it takes to build good realities.

Successful paths, rewarding presents, paths to good futures. One can see all three in this selection of profiles of people involved in the Marquette Law School sports law program. Each story is different. But, at heart, each involves people who are upping their mileage. ■

