

MVP: Latham's Adam Sullins

By Mike Curley

Law360 (September 23, 2022, 2:02 PM EDT) -- Adam Sullins of Latham & Watkins LLP has worked to get Caesars Entertainment the naming rights to the Superdome in New Orleans and helped the U.S. secure its bid to host the 2026 FIFA World Cup, earning him a spot as one of Law360's 2022 Sports & Betting MVPs.

HIS BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT THIS YEAR:

Sullins told Law360 that the FIFA deal, in which he was part of the negotiations that determined which 11 U.S. cities would host the games along with Canada and Mexico, was particularly fulfilling given his own history with the sport, as he met his wife on the soccer field.

The deal came with its own set of challenges owing to the global nature of the negotiations, with clients in the U.S. negotiating with Switzerland-based FIFA and competing with countries on other continents, he said, adding that he enjoyed the opportunity to work on the deal.

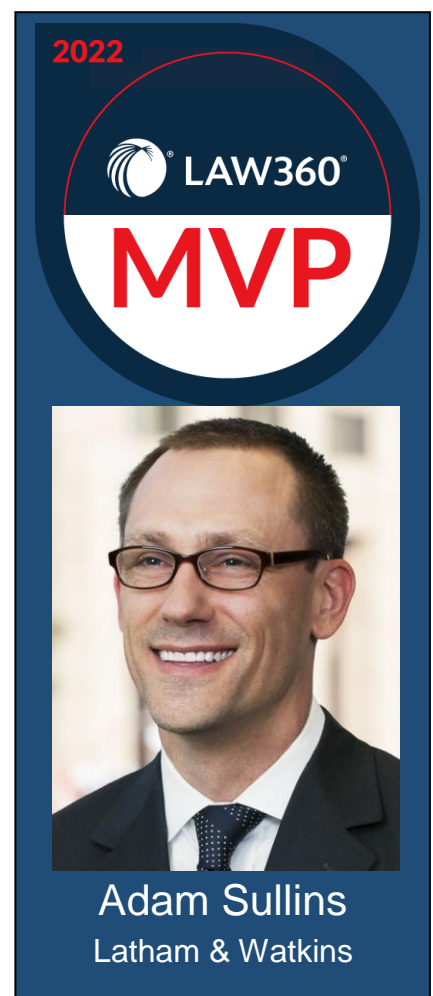
"When you talk about the World Cup and FIFA and U.S. Soccer, it's the single biggest sporting event in the world," he said. "Having an opportunity, being blessed to work on that deal, on that matter, for one that's going to be here on U.S., Canadian and Mexican soil, I think it's a little extra special."

In addition to those challenges, the "unsettled world" amid the COVID-19 pandemic made his job extra difficult, Sullins said, adding that just surviving and doing good work to deliver results for his clients is an accomplishment in itself.

"Juggling all of those things in the world that we're in today, just being able to have done the work that we did and helping our clients get to where they got to in the last year, is probably the biggest accomplishment," he said.

HIS PROUDEST MOMENT:

In addition to it being the biggest deal of his year, Sullins said he was especially proud of the work done on the World Cup city selection, as well as the Caesars deal for naming rights to the Superdome.



Sullins had worked with Caesars on various other deals, including getting a sports betting partnership with the NFL and helping it become the exclusive odd provider to ESPN, before helping the casino last year secure its 20-year, exclusive naming rights partnership with the New Orleans Saints to rechristen their stadium as the Caesars Superdome.

He noted that one of the biggest benefits to the sports practice is getting to see the fruits of his labor reflected in everyday life.

"Seeing our clients' names and logos on arenas, on stadiums, on jerseys, and seeing that out and about in the world, [having] people talking about the work we've done, like for Caesars ... it's fun to come across in the regular walks of life," he said.

Knowing how important the work is to their clients, and seeing those results become part of the sports world, is a particular point of pride for Sullins and his team, he said.

WHY HE'S A SPORTS ATTORNEY:

Sullins told Law360 that his road to his current position was a long one, which started "once I realized that I was not going to be the goalkeeper for Manchester United or the third baseman for the San Diego Padres."

After being drawn toward law in college, Sullins said he spent his early career figuring out what to do in the legal space, before spending time as an in-house attorney at trading card and memorabilia company The Upper Deck Co. running business affairs and taking on general counsel responsibilities.

From there, he said, he built a contact base among different sporting entities and stayed true to his goals of having a career in sports by taking the knowledge and experience he gained at the trading card company and bringing it to Latham to grow the sports practice.

"It's one of those slow-and-steady situations; it's not going to happen overnight," he said. "We built it over time, with my mentors who came before me, and here we are."

WHAT MOTIVATES HIM:

Doing good work for his clients and passing on his knowledge and experience to the next generation of lawyers is a big motivator for Sullins, who added that it's easy to be motivated when you work on something you enjoy.

"I was lucky enough to be able to carve out space for myself in the industry, where I could marry my passion for sports with my legal career," he said. "It's easy to be motivated, it's easy to work hard, and you have to do both when you really enjoy what you're doing."

HIS ADVICE FOR JUNIOR ATTORNEYS:

Sullins said the best advice he could give to younger attorneys is to find something that they enjoy and are passionate about.

"If you can find a career that marries your passion, whatever that might be, with your skill set — in this case, being a lawyer — I think that's the best of both worlds," he said. "It's a lot easier to put in the time, the blood, sweat and tears, if you're passionate about what you're doing."

Having a broad-based skill set is also important, he added, advising that young attorneys spend their early years doing a little bit of everything to build a wider foundation of knowledge before narrowing their specialty later on in their careers.

"It makes it easier to pivot, and it also puts you in a position where you're able to provide better, more well-rounded advice for clients in whatever the deal might be," he said.

— *As told to Mike Curley.*

Law360's MVPs of the Year are attorneys who have distinguished themselves from their peers over the past year through high-stakes litigation, record-breaking deals, and complex global matters. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2022 MVP winners after reviewing more than 900 submissions.