

MVP: Covington's Michael Hill

By Max Jaeger

Law360 (September 22, 2021, 3:16 PM EDT) -- Michel Hill, of Covington & Burling LLP's commercial and corporate transactional practice, quarterbacked the NFL's media distribution agreements with a quintet of major media companies totaling more than \$110 billion, earning him a spot as one of Law360's 2021 Sports and Betting MVPs.

HIS BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT IN THE PAST YEAR:

Hill led Covington's legal team advising the NFL on TV and digital distribution agreements that it reached with Amazon, CBS, ESPN/ABC, FOX and NBC in March. Those agreements will dictate the next decade of pro football broadcasting.

"Managing five different deals at an extremely fast pace that needed to be synced up across many key terms with five totally different counterparties — that was one of the biggest project-management efforts I've encountered, just given the pace of the deals, the size of the deals and how they really needed to be aligned in a lot of key ways," he said. "The goal is to close them all at the same time, so it was definitely a hectic last week or two weeks, but we got it done."

And if executing the NFL's multibillion-dollar media game plan wasn't enough, he orchestrated it all during a pandemic. Keeping a relatively small team helped Hill and his colleagues stay agile as they helped hash out the deals starting last year, he said.

HIS PROUDEST MOMENT:

While the deal may have been his biggest professional win, Hill said his proudest moment is one he shares with his family.

"I'd have to say the birth of my daughter beats the NFL deal on this one, but it's a close call," he said of his second child, Elizabeth.

Hill was also happy to get more time bonding — and lending a hand — while working from his apartment, he said.



"Being at home, while challenging in some ways, was kind of cool in other ways, because I could still work and walk in the next room and help out if I needed to on a little break," said Hill, who joked that his 4-year-old son was "a constant presence in most of my deals."

WHAT MOTIVATES HIM:

Hill said he's always been interested in media, and now he gets a unique view of the industry as he helps shape it by working for clients including the biggest four U.S. sports leagues, TV One, Bloomberg, EPIX, MSG Networks and Weigel Broadcasting.

"I feel like as outside counsel, I have a very privileged bird's-eye perspective over a lot of the changes we're seeing in the industry and across different players in the industry," he said.

The biggest trend he's noticed: The growing ubiquity of sports betting in media deals.

"It seems like every deal that comes up in sports has some concept of betting, whether it's built into the deal or [it's] some future-looking opportunity that relates to betting rights and opportunities," he said.

TIPS FOR YOUNG ATTORNEYS:

Hill said staying curious, always asking questions and remaining humble about one's limits are the keys to success.

"I think the best junior attorneys are those who don't subscribe to the 'fake it till you make it' motto, but those who understand there's always a lot to learn and find out different ways to do so," he said.

— *As told to Max Jaeger*

Law360's MVPs 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 2021 MVP winners after reviewing nearly 900 submissions.