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Phone: +1 646 783 7100 | Fax: +1 646 783 7161 | customerservice@law360.com

MVP: Covington's Cléa Liquard

By **Elizabeth Daley**

Law360 (December 17, 2025, 4:03 PM EST) -- Cléa Liquard of Covington & Burling LLP's insurance practice won big for the National Football League, opening up $40 million in coverage for Sunday Ticket antitrust litigation and defeating its insurers' motions for summary judgment in connection with concussion lawsuits, earning her a spot as one of the 2025 Law360 Insurance MVPs.

Her biggest accomplishments over the past year:

Liquard said she was "pretty blessed" this year, but highlighted her summary judgment win as lead counsel on behalf of the NFL on a directors and officers insurance coverage case over Sunday Ticket antitrust litigation as her top success.

In this case, Liquard explained that she was trying to gain coverage for the NFL for litigation brought against it by consumers in connection with allegations that it constrained their choice, leading to inflated prices since its Sunday Ticket subscription service was offered only through DirecTV, among other claims.

The NFL's responsible insurers were trying to argue in New York state court that there was no coverage for the 2015 Sunday Ticket litigation because it was connected to a separate antitrust lawsuit filed against the NFL in 1997 that also involved the Sunday Ticket subscription, Liquard explained.

If this argument won, it "would have meant that the NFL was without coverage at all," she said.

"In the end, the court agreed with our view of it, and said [the present Sunday Ticket litigation] was not a related claim — $40 million in coverage was at issue," Liquard said, noting that "the first few layers of insurers weren't part of the litigation."

In another New York state victory, she again was lead counsel, defeating insurers' quest for summary judgment regarding coverage of a $1 billion class action brought against the NFL for head injury and concussion claims brought by retired players.

Liquard said the case was near and dear to her, since she had been working on it since she started at Covington, noting that the attorneys with her on the case were "like a family."

Covington called it "a high-profile case that has broad implications for long-tail insurance claims under general liability policies."

When the case started, Liquard said there were around 30 insurers involved, and the NFL was seeking coverage for its defense and settlement costs paid after lawsuits filed against it in 2012 by former players, who said head collisions on the job had caused neurodegenerative diseases.

Although the case has been ongoing for years, Liquard said she recently did battle with the last remaining insurers at New York state court, where she had their summary judgment motions denied in April, when the court set the case for trial.

Notable cases she's worked on:

This year, when Liquard wasn't fighting for the NFL, she was able to score a rare policyholder win in a COVID-19 coverage case as lead counsel for the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association, a trade association for broker-dealers, investment banks and asset managers operating in the U.S. and global capital markets.

In March and April 2020, SIFMA had to cancel events, which were its main source of revenue, Liquard explained.

"They had the foresight to purchase event cancellation insurance," she said, noting that their coverage did have an exclusion for communicable diseases in certain circumstances.

"The big question was whether COVID had been declared a pandemic before SIFMA had canceled its events, and it came down to the interpretation of a few words," Liquard said.

"We argued that while the World Health Organization did offhand use of words like 'epidemic,' it was not an official declaration, and they never used the word 'declare,'" which she said was crucial to interpreting the policy.

"Simply uttering a word is not the same as declaring," Liquard said.

A New York state court agreed with her, enabling SIFMA to access just over $10 million of coverage.

What motivates her:

Liquard, who is on the hiring team at Covington, loves a job well done, in any arena.

"I really take pride in the craft — of whatever it is — I love a job that's done excellently. There's a real joy and pride when I've done a piece of work and I feel l have put my all into it," she said.

She added, "I think for the various pursuits I have outside the office, it's the same: just the love of something that's done really well."

Like many lawyers, Liquard said she enjoys "analytical argumentation and piecing together arguments

and making them compelling." She also gets "real joy" from representing her clients.

"It's a privilege to be operating at this level," Liquard said.

Her advice for junior attorneys:

While there are many things Liquard could impart after more than a decade of practice, her primary advice to those who already have skills is to "be true to your own voice."

"There's a lot of different ways to be a successful attorney, and I think there's a real power and compelling effectiveness when you find your own style. When you are comfortable in yourself and not trying to fit into a role, I think you are a much more effective advocate," Liquard said.

This advice revealed itself to her as she saw attorneys within Covington who didn't hide the unique aspects of their personalities or humor. Instead, they used their own demeanor to their advantage.

The more Liquard saw this, the more comfortable she became in being herself more fully, leading her to feel more grounded and be more effective.

Beyond that advice, she said, "I would say of course there's the classic 'work hard,' there's 'be curious,' which is maybe an underrated one."

--As told to Elizabeth Daley. Editing by Adam LoBelia.

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 2025 MVP winners after reviewing nearly 900 submissions.

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