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Rising Star: Covington's Mike Hill

By **Adam Lidgett**

Law360 (August 4, 2026, 4:00 PM EDT) -- Michael Hill of Covington & Burling LLP has made a career out of working for major sports organizations like the National Football League on massive distribution deals, including a package allowing NFL games to be seen on both digital and traditional television, earning him a spot among the media and entertainment law practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

The biggest deal of his career:

About five years ago, Hill represented the NFL on a series of agreements allowing for pro football games to be seen on regular television networks like NBC, CBS and ABC, but also on Amazon through streaming.

Hill couldn't comment on the monetary value of the deals, but news outlets at the time pegged them at being worth more than $100 billion.

"The scale of those deals" made them the biggest of his career, Hill said, "given who the NFL is and how the NFL is the most valuable property on TV and the most watched property on TV."

Those types of deals "are inherently important deals for the media ecosystem," Hill said, noting that the process required the NFL to negotiate at the same time with multiple companies that all have their own strategies and nuances in terms of how they operate. He said success depended on a lot of organization and cooperation.

"Those types of deals require you to move at a fast pace and be extremely detail-oriented to ensure ... consistency," Hill said.

The most interesting deal he's worked on lately:

Also for the NFL, Hill advised on a deal completed in January in which The Walt Disney Co. subsidiary ESPN acquired the NFL Network and other intellectual property from the league, which in turn received a

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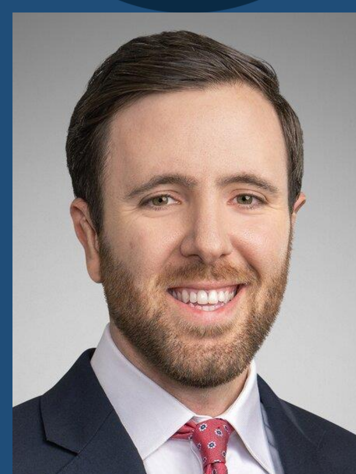

Mike Hill
Covington

Age: 40
Home base: New York
Position: Of counsel
Law school: Fordham University School of Law
First job after law school: Lawyer at Kramer Levin, now Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer LLP

10% equity stake in ESPN.

"The NFL decided that ESPN was the right company in this pay television landscape to operate NFL Network, given ESPN's stature in the traditional linear television world," Hill said of the deal. "What was interesting about that was it gives ESPN a lot of control over a property that is so highly associated with the NFL that it is called the NFL Network."

Having both the licensing component and the equity stake component made the deal unique because "it's not every day that a sports league gets an equity stake," Hill said.

"It's not one that there was a lot of precedent for it in a lot of ways," Hill said.

What motivates him:

Hill said he is motivated by the satisfaction of doing a good job for his clients, which have also included Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer and the U.S. Tennis Association.

But beyond that, being a sports fan and a movie fan, he said, "it's fun to get to work in an industry you're personally a fan of."

Why he is a sports media attorney:

Hill said he enjoys doing the kind of transactions that shape the media and entertainment industry. He added that he enjoys working on forward-thinking deals and new transactions that shape what's to come in the industry.

"I'm interested in the business of it," Hill said of his practice. "I'm a lawyer, and that is my role, but I think part of my role is understanding the industry I'm in. I view myself as an expert in the industry."

How he thinks his industry will change in the next 10 years:

He said the thing he hears a lot is that the media environment has been fragmented, with a lot of different services and locations.

It is in a transitional space, he said, and the goal would be to get people content the way they want, whether through bundling or consolidation of platforms and interfaces.

"There's definitely a lot of fragmentation right now, but there is new excitement about new platforms and new ways to access content," he said.

--As told to Adam Lidgett. Editing by Rich Mills.

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2026 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,100 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2026, to be eligible for this year's award.
