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You co-lead your firm's team representing the US Soccer Federation in *North American Soccer League LLC v. US Soccer Federation*. NASL claimed that USSF conspired with co-defendant Major League Soccer to monopolize and exclude NASL from professional soccer in the United States. A jury in the Eastern District of New York issued a unanimous defense verdict in February 2025, denying NASL the \$1 billion in damages it initially sought. Tell us about your trial strategy.

Our strategy centered on undermining the credibility of the plaintiff's fact and expert witnesses. A constant theme we presented to the jury was not to trust what the plaintiff's witnesses were saying now but what they had said back at the time before they contemplated suing. We confronted fact witnesses with documents showing how they praised US Soccer repeatedly during the relevant period and thanked US Soccer for trying to help the NASL succeed. And we showed the jury how the plaintiff's liability and damages experts were taking positions in conflict with their prior writings and the facts.

Ultimately, the toughest strategic decision we made was when the plaintiff rested its case after three weeks of trial. While we had prepared a defense that included about two weeks' worth of fact and expert testimony, we decided not to call any live witnesses. Instead, we played a couple hours of deposition videos and then rested.

Fortunately, our read of the jury was correct, and it only took the jury 90 minutes to return a unanimous verdict in favor of US Soccer and MLS. [The US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit affirmed the ruling in May 2026].

Tell us about some of the challenges you faced in *NASL v. USSF* and how you overcame them.

US Soccer is a not-for-profit, and given trebled damages and joint and several liability in antitrust cases, even a partial verdict in favor of NASL carried enterprise-threatening exposure and massive attorneys' fees. It was thus imperative not only that we "win" but that we obtain a full defense verdict. Another complicating reality was that the relevant facts in the case spanned decades, and there was an enormous discovery record as litigation had commenced back in 2017.

We overcame these challenges by mining the massive discovery record to highlight the inconsistencies between NASL's litigation positions and their contemporaneous statements. We attacked plaintiff's witnesses' credibility and showed that the narrative that US Soccer had caused NASL's demise was something NASL only began advancing once it sued.

Take us back. When did you first know you wanted to be a trial lawyer?

Buterman: As a young associate, I found myself leading a pro-bono trial in New York State Court. It was the first time I ever examined witnesses or presented an opening statement or closing argument. I'd like to say I was a "natural," but in many respects, I was terrible. We lost, but I loved being in the courtroom and part of a trial team working together toward a singular goal. Decades later, I still carry the lessons I learned.

Yates: I had the opportunity to work with multiple mentors on a trial relatively early in my career. I realized that each had a different style—and embraced it, because being yourself is critical to success in the courtroom. I realized that I could learn from each of them, but I ultimately had to remain true to my own style. I also learned that there is no one right way to try cases. I loved debating the right approach to witnesses and everything else that comes with being a part of trial teams. I still love the process of workshopping strategy with our trial teams.

What are the major keys to winning over a jury or a judge?

Buterman: Credibility and authenticity. Trials are about convincing juries and judges to accept your presentation of the facts. If you lose the trust of the factfinder, you make that ultimate task much more difficult. Sometimes, conceding your opponent has the better of an argument can actually benefit you more in the long run.

Yates: Additionally, streamline your presentation to the greatest extent possible. Even in complicated antitrust cases—which is what we typically try—presenting a simple, straightforward, narrative that leads the factfinder to the answer you want to reach is key.

What is the best advice you give young trial lawyers?

Buterman: There is no single right way to do any of this. Observe how your mentors do it, but ultimately develop your own style.

Yates: Look for opportunities to get stand-up experience, because the way you get better at presenting is by doing it.

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