Cooley

Michael Sheetz

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Boston

Commercial Litigation
Trade Secret Litigation and Dispute Counseling
White Collar Defense and Investigations
Sports+

As a first-chair trial lawyer and senior counselor, Mike tackles “big problems” for Cooley clients across business sectors throughout the US. He routinely advises boards of directors and CEOs on high-profile, bet-the-company matters. Mike has more than 30 years of experience handling high-stakes business litigation in US federal and state courts. He has acted as lead trial counsel in many high-profile complex commercial matters, including dozens of trade secret cases in more than 20 states. Mike has led many sensitive internal investigations on a range of issues for both for-profit and not-for-profit clients. His diverse practice also includes representing senior business executives. For much of his career, Mike has negotiated employment agreements (either company-side or on behalf of management) involving senior management teams, CEOs and other C-level executives.

Chambers USA has recognized Mike as a Band 1 leader in commercial litigation, with a client noting: “He is hands down the best lawyer I work with. He is legally skilled, strategic and good at connecting the dots. He is exceptional at looking into the future and predicting things.” The Legal 500 US has also recognized Mike as a key lawyer in Cooley’s trade secrets practice.

Mike is co-chair of Cooley’s sports law practice, sports+. He has represented some of the top sports organizations and athletes in the US in a variety of matters for many years.

Mike’s recent litigation experience:

- **EarnIn consumer class actions (N.D. Cal.)** – Serves as lead counsel defending leading fintech company EarnIn in a series of class actions under various California consumer protection statutes; the cases present industry-defining questions about the validity of so-called earned wage access products
- ***Pearson v. Chegg*** **(D.N.J.)** – Served as lead counsel for Chegg in a complex copyright infringement matter brought by the leading US textbook publisher, directing a large team of lawyers through many court hearings, dozens of depositions and extensive expert discovery heading toward ultimate case disposition
- ***Anoush v. Uber***, along with six companion cases, **(D. Mass.)** – Served as co-lead trial counsel for Uber in a case brought by 34 taxi medallion-owning corporations that alleged unfair competition and conspiracy and sought more than $400 million in damages at trial; won a complete defense verdict for Uber across the board, on both liability and damages (verdict upheld on appeal), and en route to the trial victory, managed three years of complex discovery and intensive motion practice in the case, along with six other consolidated cases brought by a total of 750+ taxi companies seeking more than

$1 billion in damages

- *Phoenix Navigation Components LLC v. EMCORE* **(AAA arbitration in New York City and companion court cases in California and New York)** – Won a significant plaintiff's verdict and attorneys' fee award for a cutting-edge navigation company after trial as first chair in a hotly contested breach of contract and trade secret case
- *Theissen et al. v. Chegg* **(Superior Court of Santa Clara County, California, and related AAA action)** – Served as lead counsel for Chegg in a successful resolution and dismissal of 16,000+ individual arbitrations filed following a massive data breach
- *EMC v. Williams*, *EMC v. Alexis*, *EMC v. Baker* and *EMC v. Ferreira* **(D. Mass.)** – Successfully defended employees of California-based data storage innovator Rubrik in four separate cases alleging theft of Dell EMC trade secrets and violations of nonsolicitation agreements; each action requested injunctive relief, no court orders ever issued and each of the cases was ultimately dismissed
- *Paterno v. NCAA and Ray* **(Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas)** – Successfully represented the chair of the NCAA executive committee in a long-running case brought by the Joe Paterno family in the shadow of the Penn State/Jerry Sandusky scandal; after nearly four years of active litigation, and on the eve of summary judgment, the plaintiffs dismissed the case with zero consideration
- *EMC v. Pure Storage* **(D. Mass.)** – Successfully defended data storage company Pure Storage in seven highly publicized trade secret cases brought by EMC challenging the hiring of more than 200 EMC employees and allegations of unfair competition and disclosure of trade secrets

Mike's recent internal investigations:

- Retained by a special board committee of a technology company to investigate whistleblower claims of illegal market conduct
- Retained by a top US university to advise on crisis management and conduct an internal investigation into alleged misconduct by a senior executive as reported in major national news stories
- Retained by a special board committee of a nationally renowned nonprofit institution to investigate #MeToo claims raised by a senior member of management
- Retained by the board of directors of a venture-funded technology company to investigate alleged lack of financial and operational controls
- Retained by a special board committee of a major healthcare organization to investigate alleged noncompliance with best practices and federal reimbursement regulations
- Retained by a private equity-owned technology company to investigate whistleblower complaints about alleged financial and other impropriety
- Retained by the board of directors of a major US collegiate conference to investigate alleged financial mismanagement by key executives

Mike's recent employment experience:

- Represented the management team of a public life sciences company in connection with a $4 billion acquisition by a private equity firm
- Represented the CEO and other senior management of a $2 billion private equity-owned medical device company in connection with a recapitalization and the sale of a major subsidiary
- Represented a major collegiate athletic conference in connection with the hiring of a new commissioner
- Represented numerous presidents of major universities in contract negotiations
- Represented the incoming CEO of a venture-backed life sciences startup in connection with his contract and building of the management team
- Represented the incoming CEO at a Fortune 100 company in connection with her contract

Mike's representative sports clients include:

- Pac-12 Conference
- Several National Basketball Association teams

- A National Football League team
- Fritz Pollard Alliance

Publications

Co-author, "Why Today's Universities Need Outside Counsel for Improved Investigations," University Business, October 10, 2024

Giving back

Mike has been actively involved as a leader in the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) for 30+ years. He currently serves as chair of litigation oversight for ADL and most recently as president of the ADL Foundation and as a director on ADL's national board. Mike also is the former chair of ADL's New England regional board and has held many other national roles with ADL. In addition, he has won numerous awards from ADL for his leadership.

Education

Georgetown University Law Center JD, cum laude

Tufts University BA, Political Science and Latin, magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa

Admissions & Credentials

Massachusetts

Court Admissions

US Supreme Court

US Court of Appeals for the First Circuit

US District Court for the District of Massachusetts

Many district and other courts across the US (pro hac vice)

Rankings & Accolades

Chambers USA: Litigation: General Commercial – Massachusetts (2021 – 2026)

The Legal 500 US: General Commercial Disputes (2023 – 2025)

The Legal 500 US: Trade Secrets (Litigation and Non-contentious Matters)

Massachusetts Super Lawyer

Excellence in Pro Bono – Mass Lawyers Weekly