

MVP: Skadden's Karen M. Lent

By Christine DeRosa

Law360 (October 12, 2023, 1:23 PM EDT) -- Karen M. Lent of Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP helped defend the PGA Tour in a massive antitrust lawsuit brought by its own golfers, which ended in a settlement between the organization and its competitor LIV Golf Inc., earning her a place among Law360's 2023 Antitrust MVPs.

Her biggest accomplishment:

Lent said her biggest accomplishment over the last year was the work she did for her client PGA Tour Inc. in its high-stakes California federal battle against LIV.

The dispute began in June 2022, when certain PGA Tour golfers requested to participate in Saudi-backed rival LIV's inaugural event. The PGA Tour denied their request, citing player handbook regulations that led to 17 golfers who played in the LIV event being suspended and banned from the Tour's FedEx Cup Championship.

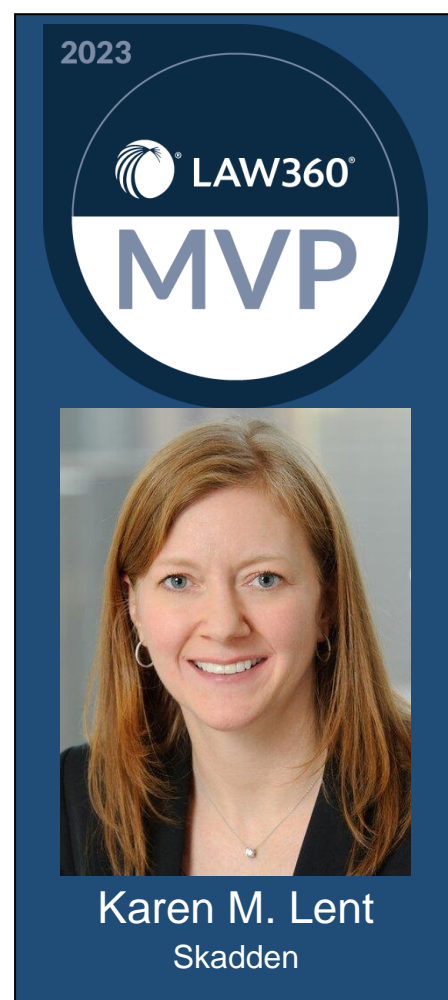
Three PGA Tour members sought a temporary restraining order requiring the Tour to let them play the FedEx Cup Playoffs while their antitrust claims continued, but Skadden defeated that motion last August.

Following nearly a year of pretrial discovery, the PGA Tour and LIV, along with the PGA European Tour — also known as the DP World Tour — announced a deal in June 2023 to merge their businesses and rights, putting an end to the antitrust and contract litigation.

"To me, the biggest accomplishment was working with that in-house team, and we had fantastic co-counsel at Kecker Van Nest," Lent said. "To do an antitrust case of that magnitude on such a fast track and at such a high quality really just felt like a huge accomplishment for the past year."

Her proudest moment:

Lent's proudest moment was sitting in the courtroom last year when the judge denied the golfers' application for a temporary restraining order.



"We'd worked tremendously hard on our opposition papers and preparing for argument and including, as I said, working with the Keker team and the in-house folks," she said. "Just being in the courtroom and hearing the judge deny their motion, such a great feeling. It just also felt like we were on the side of right, and it was a good day for the golf world."

Her biggest challenge:

Lent's biggest challenge was that at the same time of the PGA Tour case, she had many other cases that were starting to get busy.

Antitrust cases tend to play out over years, not months, and there are times when attorneys have a docket full of cases, and half of them are relatively inactive because they're waiting for a decision on a motion or filing from the other side, she said.

But for a time last year, it felt like every case Lent had was active, and that was challenging.

Last year, she co-led the Skadden team in defending Apple against claims its agreement to make Google the default search engine on its browser and receive a share of Google Search revenue dissuaded Apple from developing its own search engine.

The case, which was first filed in late 2021, was dismissed by the judge in March 2023.

Lent is also leading the team in the defense of Columbia University in a dispute alleging it engaged in price-fixing in relation to the methodology for determining students' financial need. The case was filed in January 2022.

"Something that has been challenging ever since I was a young associate is to figure out how to manage your workflow," Lent said. "In the course of having this very significant, important PGA Tour case, there were a number of other things that were popping up. Thankfully, the teams that I work with here are really strong and were able to keep moving ahead without missing a beat and obtaining good results even in the face of all that stuff happening at the same time."

Why she's a competition and antitrust attorney:

Lent studied chemical engineering at Johns Hopkins University, so becoming an antitrust attorney might not have been the obvious path, she said. But when she started at Skadden as a summer associate, she became interested in being an attorney and wanted to try every practice area.

"In the antitrust group at Skadden, we were representing, at that time back in the late 90s, major professional sports leagues and their antitrust issues," Lent said. "I found that to be a fascinating way for me to combine my interest in sports as a basketball player with my interest in law and that hooked me into antitrust."

Lent added that over time she's come to appreciate that being an antitrust lawyer requires her to understand the dynamics of whatever industry her client is involved in, so she becomes a mini expert in that area.

What motivates her:

"I have two daughters and a son, and I really am motivated to show them that I can do this job that feels big and important and have a successful career and also just still be their mom and be able to manage all of that," Lent said. "I think it's important for them to see women in a successful career."

Her advice to junior attorneys:

Lent's advice for junior attorneys is to be curious about what they're working on and think about the ways they can add value to the team.

"They shouldn't treat the work as a homework assignment, but it really should be that we're working together as a team, and how can they make themselves important to the team whether it's mastering the facts, which is something that typically the younger associates are doing or becoming an expert in a particular line of cases or area of the law, even really planning ahead," she said.

Lent said those are the kinds of junior attorneys that she wants to work with and give more opportunities and responsibilities to.

"Be curious and proactive," she said. "Don't just sit back and wait for it all to come to you."

--As told to Christine DeRosa

Law360's MVPs of the Year 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 2023 MVP winners after reviewing more than 900 submissions.