

# My balancing act as a sports agent and big law attorney

By Nicole Lynn, *Texas Lawyer* — December 20, 2019

**Nicole Lynn, of Houston, is a double threat: By day, she's an associate at Norton Rose Fulbright, where she represents financial institutions and energy companies in securities, breach of contract and products liability issues, while at night and on weekends she is a sports agent, hobnobbing and representing players in the NFL and college.**

Everyone knows lawyers at big law firms face client demands and critical deadlines on a regular basis while helping Fortune 500 companies navigate complicated legal issues.

And Hollywood has also given people a glimpse into the life of a sports agent: a pressure-packed job requiring negotiation skills with teams and responsiveness to high-profile clientele.

I am in a very interesting position because I wear both hats. I am an associate at global law firm **Norton Rose Fulbright** and a sports agent. This year, I became the first African American woman to represent a Top 3 pick in the NFL draft as well as only the third woman to represent a player drafted in the first round.

At **Norton Rose Fulbright**, I represent financial institutions and energy companies in securities, breach of contract and products liability issues. I am part of a disputes team representing an offshore equipment company in a complex \$550 million property damage lawsuit.

I am often asked how I manage these two demanding and different careers. The short answer is I have a very busy schedule. The long answer is I have a high motor and understand what it takes to achieve this balancing act: focus, time management, hard work and endurance.

I believe my upbringing helped me to get to where I am today. As a child in Tulsa, Oklahoma, my dad wasn't around. My mom was young and struggled to provide for me and my younger brother. Home for me was bouncing around from place to place.

But I took it to heart when teachers and others said school could be a way out of poverty. I applied to and was accepted at Booker T. Washington High School, an outstanding magnet school on the other side of Tulsa.

After a high school counselor encouraged me to apply, I attended the University of Oklahoma, where I became friends with some of the players on the Sooners football team. After graduating, I worked for a year before going to law school at the University of Oklahoma.

The idea of becoming a sports agent already had been percolating because I was bothered by stories about black athletes who came from nothing, became rich in professional sports and went broke soon after retirement. I wanted to help athletes turn their lives into something other than cautionary tales.

In 2016, I came to Houston and became a dispute resolution and litigation lawyer in the financial institutions and insurance group at **Norton Rose Fulbright**. I had informed the firm I would try to moonlight as a sports agent, but launching that career was difficult.

Sports agencies did not return my calls. Finally, a top agency—PlayersRep Sports Management—hired me, and I became its first female agent.

It's difficult to convey how hard I worked to get my first client. I cold-called countless athletes. When they didn't respond, I would drive to college towns on game days and wait outside stadiums to try to meet draft prospects postgame. Once, on my birthday, I drove six hours intending to make such a pitch. While I was waiting, it started to rain. I looked like a wreck when I finally spotted the player, and he brushed me off.

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## “My Balancing Act as a Sports Agent and Big Law Attorney”

I never gave up, and I've built a significant roster of clients over the last few years. Today, I represent more than 20 athletes and entertainers, including 14 NFL players, two college assistant coaches, three pro softball players, a ballet dancer and a rapper.

In 2017, Young Money APAA Sports Agency, owned by rapper Lil Wayne, bought PlayersRep. I now work for Young Money.

In 2018, I was among the winners of an award given by the Hustle, a website that promotes inspirational speeches by professional women who have overcome barriers to advance their careers. In my winning speech, I recounted my story of waiting in the rain and not getting a chance to make my pitch.

University of Alabama defensive tackle Quinnen Williams, who won the Outland Trophy as the top college interior lineman in 2018, saw my speech on YouTube. He told me he was impressed by my determination and wanted someone who would work that hard for him.

That's how this year I came to be the first black woman to represent a top draft choice in the NFL draft. Williams was selected as the third pick overall, taken by the New York Jets. Williams has been incredible to work with, and I am proud we have been able to enjoy great success together.

My supervising partner at **Norton Rose Fulbright**, immensely talented litigator Andrew Price, has supported my career, mentored me and given me the flexibility to attain my goals. Working at a global law firm has allowed me to increase my legal skills and given me a broader perspective than many other sports agents. I focus on providing outstanding client service in both my law firm and sports agency work.

In chasing my dreams, I've had obstacles in my path but have not dwelled on what might hold me back. I challenge dreamers to pursue their goals—even ones that might seem crazy or unattainable—and risk failing. I know that if I had I not pushed the limits of what might be possible, then I would not be where I am today. My career as a big-law attorney and sports agent is absolutely a dream come true for me.

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