

Norton Rose Fulbright NY Head Fields Legal Work Alongside World Cup

By Tracey Read

Law360 (July 31, 2023, 4:16 PM EDT) -- Vincent Dunn apologizes for his raspy voice.

The night before, he had been cheering on his daughter, Crystal Dunn, a defender on the U.S. Women's National Team, in a nail-biting Thursday match with the Netherlands at the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup in Wellington, New Zealand.

The USWNT is going for its third straight World Cup title. After beating Vietnam 3-0 in its opening match, the USWNT's second match in the tournament against the Netherlands ended in a 1-1 draw.

"They have a very important game coming up on [August] first," Dunn, co-partner in charge of the New York office at Norton Rose Fulbright, told Law360 Pulse from New Zealand. "If they just get a tie, they move on, but we need a win to get ideally the first-place spot, because it affects who you play in the knockout round. "

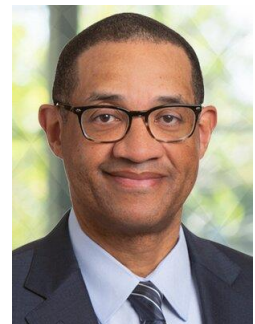
On Tuesday, the Americans will face Portugal before the tournament — jointly hosted by Australia and New Zealand — moves into the knockout stage with the last 16 teams standing.

"When you have a child that plays in these games, it's extremely nerve-racking," he said. "Every game is at an intensely important level, so it's not easy watching these close games. We're only in game two. We knew it would be a tough game. Watching these games, every play you're like screaming because of the stress. It's probably more stressful for parents than for players, because they're in the moment. But it's exciting, and this is a very unique opportunity."

Dunn has been juggling his BigLaw and soccer dad duties since arriving before the tournament began July 20, and he plans to stay as long as his daughter's team remains. He also witnessed Crystal Dunn help lead her team to victory four years ago in France.

The attorney said he's been shocked at how many U.S. supporters he's seen rooting the team on.

"There is crazy, crazy USA support here; it's unbelievable," he said. "I did not expect that going into the other part of the world. First of all, it's a major commitment to get here. The flight is like 13 hours from LA."



Vincent Dunn



Crystal Dunn

Dunn acknowledged that there are some challenges with leading a major law office while embarking on such a journey. The main issue is the time difference between New York and New Zealand.

"There's a deal that's gonna close while I am physically here," he said. "And there are two deals that are taking off that are starting while I'm here. And then there's some other things going on. So it's a mixed bag. I knew what it was. It's part of the life with who we are as partners. We all deal with that work somewhere else. I had to do this four years ago when she was in France, so it's fine. France was just a little bit more manageable a time difference than this one."

Dunn represents domestic and international clients in banking, finance and leasing transactions in numerous sectors.

"It's not easy because of my work life, and with the work life, the 16-hour time difference makes it even tougher because I have several deals going on," he said. "I'm up early talking to people, but I do try to tell them to try not to put me in the deal call before 2 p.m. Eastern Time, which is 6 a.m. the next day here."

Dunn said he tries to do a lot of his law work early in the day, and then makes the most of the off days in the matches to concentrate on work and do fun excursions with the other soccer parents.

He added that this World Cup is even more special due to the fact that his daughter and her husband now have a 14-month-old son, Marcel.

"Not too many women playing at this level have children, and she gets to see him in between games and at different times," Dunn said. "When she played on her pro team in Portland and she travels to a game, she has an au pair who helps. They both travel with her all over for games. My grandson has probably been in four countries already."

Meanwhile, Dunn said U.S. Soccer helps manage some of the challenges for the team's friends and family via organized buses and chartered flights.

"We're all staying at the same hotel, and we travel together," he said. "That makes it a lot easier. It'd be tough managing getting to each game, getting tickets and coordinating our location. It is a choreographed effort by U.S. Soccer for sure."

Meanwhile, Crystal Dunn is not his only child who became a professional athlete. His son, Henry Dunn, was drafted by the Cleveland Indians — now the Cleveland Guardians — and played a couple of years of minor league baseball in the Cleveland program.

Vincent Dunn — who has two other grandsons from his son — credits his wife, Rhonda, with being the reason he was able to maintain a busy career while supporting his children's athletic pursuits.



Vincent Dunn, co-partner in charge of Norton Rose Fulbright's New York office, is pictured with his daughter, professional soccer player Crystal Dunn, on Saturday in Auckland, New Zealand. Crystal, who helped lead the U.S. women's team to victory in 2019 in France, is once again competing in the FIFA Women's World Cup. (Courtesy of Vincent Dunn)

"All those years, it was a lot of moving around on weekends, and managing after hours stuff and my wife is a big, big factor of that," he said. "Many of our vacations early on were related to where they were doing stuff. Like if they had a tournament, we stayed a day in Arizona or Vegas or whatever. People who have children who play at a high level, that becomes your life. Listen, there's always a lot of personal time sacrifice. A lot of people go on vacation with other couples and do other stuff, but our life wasn't like that, with two of them chasing dreams and stuff."

Dunn said he and his wife never pushed their children in their chosen pursuits.

In the case of Crystal, soccer happened by accident. When she was 5 years old, they enrolled her in a youth soccer program after moving from Queens to Rockville Centre, New York, to give her something to do.

"We just moved to a town that had good schools and a good commute to Manhattan for me, and little did we know it was a big soccer community, so we just kind of fell into it," he said.

Dunn has been in his current role for more than seven years. Before that, he worked at Chadbourne & Parke LLP for nearly 27 years, before that firm combined with Norton Rose, starting as a summer associate and working his way up to partner.

Therefore, because some longtime partners have known Dunn's children since they were small, they've gone through Crystal's journey indirectly with him.

On two occasions, she's spoken to the firm — once during Black History Month.

"When [the World Cup] was in France, they did have watch parties," Dunn said of the firm. "It was a TV set up in conference rooms where they were broadcasting the games when she was playing. And obviously, they won the entire World Cup last time, so they had a lovely cake made of USA soccer stuff for me back in New York at a partners meeting, so it was pretty cool."

Still, Dunn says he normally avoids calling attention to his children.

"I don't walk around talking about Crystal," he said. "I never, ever say, 'My daughter plays for the U.S. Women's Soccer Team.' It's always like a partner or associate happens to tell someone about it. I'm very modest about this stuff. Really, it's kind of awkward for me, to be perfectly honest."

In fact, Dunn says he barely even talks to Crystal about her game performances when he sees her.

"If you Google her, you can read a thousand things about her success, but oddly enough, I don't talk to her about it," he said. "To me, Crystal is Crystal. She's very accomplished. She's very good at what she does. But when we get together, we talk about family, we talk about food, we give our recommendations on Netflix. That's what it's like."

--Editing by Nicole Bleier.