Proskauer

Alumni Reflections: Sports Law, Stadiums, and the “Proskauer Tree” with Wayne Katz and Megha Parekh

June 30, 2026

Corporate partner **Wayne Katz** and Proskauer alumna **Megha Parekh**, executive vice president and chief legal officer of the Jacksonville Jaguars, first worked together in Proskauer's New York office, where Megha was a corporate associate with the Firm's sports practice. Since leaving in 2013, Megha's career has grown, culminating in a broad leadership position across the Khan family's sports, entertainment, and development portfolio where she’s contributed to transformative projects such as the acquisition of Fulham Football Club, the launch of All Elite Wrestling and its television partnership, and the creation of Daily’s Place amphitheater.

In this conversation, Wayne and Megha discuss the deals and people that shaped her path, the "Proskauer tree branches" that span the sports industry, and the lasting value of rigorous training, meaningful guidance, and a group that took a serious approach to both work and camaraderie.

Starting in a Down Market

Wayne Katz: You summered in 2008 and started in 2009, during a very uncertain period. What made Proskauer feel like the right place to build your career?

Megha Parekh: I picked Proskauer in large part because I genuinely liked all the people I interviewed with. I remember being in law school during the fall and getting a call from **Joe Leccese**, who said, "Don't worry, you will start on time." It was a very difficult time for many people, so I was grateful for that reassurance.

Wayne Katz: And you started when the transactional market was slow.

Megha Parekh: It was. Only a handful of us started in the corporate practice, so we worked on a little bit of everything. M&A activity picked up in 2010 and 2011, and then we started doing more of the sports deals, which were foundational experiences. The first 18 months were wild, but in retrospect it prepared me well for my move in-house. Whatever comes up now, I usually have at least a sense of the first step to take.

Wayne Katz: That is very similar to when I started in 1991, which was also a recession. Things eventually picked up, and one of my first M&A deals was the Eagles purchase in 1993. And one of your big deals we worked on together was the Browns purchase.

Megha Parekh: The Browns was probably my last big transaction at Proskauer. And the connections I made at Proskauer ultimately led me to the Jacksonville Jaguars. The Firm did the deal for Shad Khan's purchase of the team, and through that work I met people who later became part of my Jacksonville story. A year or so after that deal, there was an opportunity with the Jaguars. It was the Proskauer relationship that helped open that door.

“There are plenty of Proskauer tree branches all around.”

Megha Parekh, Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer, Jacksonville Jaguars

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The Proskauer Sports Tree

Wayne Katz: One of the interesting things about your story is how much the alumni network in the sports industry, particularly in the NFL, played a part. There are Proskauer alumni at teams and league offices all over the place.

Megha Parekh: When I started with the Jaguars, it was helpful to be able to call another Proskauer alum to get my legs under me. For instance, **Ted Tywang** in Cleveland and I talk a lot because they are looking at stadium renovations and their ownership has expanded into other sports, similar to us. There are Proskauer people in Philadelphia, Chicago, and Green Bay, among other places. There are plenty of Proskauer tree branches all around.

Wayne Katz: That network is valuable because these in-house roles are so broad. It is not just player contracts or sponsorship agreements.

Megha Parekh: Exactly. Being in-house, none of us is an expert in everything. Everyone has a different history. I did more M&A and finance, so I am comfortable there. Other people have backgrounds in technology, employment, litigation, or other areas. You may not have the answer to everything, but it helps to know whom to call.

Wayne Katz: And in your case, the job has become much more than football.

Megha Parekh: I thought I was going to work for a football team, which would have been plenty interesting. But it became football plus. Since I joined, the family bought Fulham Football Club; we worked on naming rights and stadium renovations, added pools and video boards, renovated club spaces, opened Daily's Place, launched All Elite Wrestling, built a new training facility, and now are in the middle of stadium construction. The job has kept expanding, which has made it even more interesting.

Training for the In-House Role

Wayne Katz: How did the work you did at Proskauer translate to the in-house role you have now?

Megha Parekh: The breadth of matters I worked on at Proskauer helped a lot. We worked on securities offerings, finance, M&A, and league-wide sports matters. Later, when All Elite Wrestling was launching and doing its first television deal, I felt comfortable getting through the high-level deal structure and figuring out what mattered. There is rarely something I see now that I have not at least touched in some way.

Wayne Katz: The fast-paced, high-expectation environment here could be a training ground, too

Megha Parekh: There has not been a day in-house that was more challenging than a day at Proskauer. That is not to say the Jaguars work is not stressful — it is. But Proskauer taught me how to manage demanding deadlines, high expectations, and complex work while maintaining a high standard of quality. I still remember late nights working towards important deadlines and learning how to stay focused under pressure. So, when things get stressful in-house, I can usually stay calm.

Wayne Katz: There is also the attention to drafting.

Megha Parekh: I think of you often when we are negotiating contracts. You used to say that contracts were shorter when people had to type them up and mail them. There were fewer turns and people focused on the really important issues. Now it is easy to dwell on every possible scenario because technology lets you keep adding words. You taught me to be thoughtful about word choice and why it matters.

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Mentorship and Perspective

Wayne Katz: Do you remember when we first started working together?

Megha Parekh: We often worked around the same matters, but collaborating on the Browns deal was probably the most substantive. And I will say this: you are really a thoughtful, caring mentor and teacher. You are thoughtful about drafting and about helping people grow.

Wayne Katz: I take pride in that. A lot of associates I worked with closely have gone on to do great things, which is incredibly rewarding.

Megha Parekh: That is something I have come to appreciate even more in-house. Everyone you work with is a person first. After the NFL encouraged teams to deepen their mental health awareness, I trained and volunteered with Crisis Text Line, which taught me how to really listen, gave me tools to help colleagues in crisis, and made me a better lawyer, negotiator, and friend. Back at Proskauer, we had a great group of colleagues. People liked each other, wanted to help each other, and took the work seriously without taking themselves too seriously.

Wayne Katz: And that kind of culture shows up later. You need more than smart people to run a legal department or a sports business. You need people who are collaborative, practical, and enjoyable to work with.

Megha Parekh: Exactly. Those relationships last because they are real. Even now, across the sports world, I can call a Proskauer alum/alumna and talk through an issue. That says a lot about the Firm and its people.