

Former baseball player found a love for different kind of game in the law

By Brian Cox

As attorney Jason Murrie sees it, much of his practice is about helping clients maintain perspective. A critical part of his job is to clarify that perspective for them.

"The first time I meet with a client, if somebody's getting sued because something bad happened, it's always important to me to arrange a meeting with them face-to-face and sit down and talk through it," he says. "Here's the perspective, I tell them. Here's how this is going to go."

Holding things in the right perspective is a principle Murrie picked up from his father, Joel Murrie, who was head baseball coach at Western Kentucky University for 26 seasons and is now a scout for the Los Angeles Angels.

"One thing my dad always said that sticks out to me is, in baseball if you fail seven times out of 10 as a hitter, you're in the Hall of Fame," says Murrie.



Attorney Jason Murrie grew up in a baseball family in Bowling Green, Ky., where his father was the head baseball coach of the Western Kentucky University Hilltoppers.



The lesson behind the baseball truism, he explains, centers around the perspective a person adopts in dealing with adversity.

"You're going to face adversity," he says. "The people who are good at what they do are the ones who can stay focused, who can regroup or shift the plan to keep their eye on the prize."

The Nashville attorney with Cornelius & Collins, LLP, incorporates that philosophy into his practice and into how he counsels clients.

Born and raised in Bowling Green, Ky., home of the Hilltoppers, Murrie says baseball was a way of life for his family. In addition to playing in Little League and throughout high school, Murrie says summer jobs involved putting down sod on the college ball field and painting the bleachers and dugouts. Away games became road trips. The family vacationed in winter — summer was baseball season, after all.

He grew up a Chicago Cubs fan and remembers hurrying home from school to turn on the game when the Cubs played afternoons at Wrigley Field.

One of his fondest memories is of a time his father took him to see the Cubs play against the Los Angeles Dodgers. As a scout, Murrie's dad had access to the media dining room and after catching batting practice the two went to have lunch. The small room was in the press box at the time and was packed with media and other scouts.

"We're sitting there eating and I hear this voice behind me say, 'Do you mind if I have this chair and sit next to you?'" recounts Murrie, who was in law school at the time. "I recognized the voice immediately. I knew exactly who it was. I didn't even have to turn around."

It was Vin Scully, the legendary play-by-play announcer for the Dodgers for an astounding 67 seasons. His tenure with the Dodgers is the longest of any broadcaster with a single team in professional sports history.

"I'm not going to tell Vin Scully not to sit next to me," says Murrie with a laugh. "He just sat there, holding court and telling stories. It was just an unbelievable experience."

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A catcher and pitcher during high school, Murrie took a realistic view on a career in baseball. As the son of a coach, he understood better than most his prospects as a player. Instead, he decided to earn a law degree with the thought of then pursuing a position in sports management.

After graduating with a degree in history from the University of Florida — where both his parents had gone — Murrie enrolled at the University of Louisville School of Law. A summer clerkship at a general civil litigation firm back home in Bowling Green following his first year changed Murrie's professional trajectory.

He had never given much thought to litigation, but that summer he got a taste of it and he was hooked.

"It really fed my competitive juices," he says. "And it was something I really enjoyed."

The historian in him liked the research and writing that was required and the competitor in him liked "getting into court and mixing it up" with opponents.

"I thought this is something I can see myself doing," he says.

He returned to the firm after graduation and in a few months he was "doing real lawyer work." It was a firm that encouraged learning by doing and Murrie embraced the challenge.

The firm's managing partner, Tom Kerrick, was an early mentor who taught Murrie how to conduct himself as a lawyer. He emphasized the importance of being reasonable with clients and of developing a reputation for being able to work with people. Murrie applies those lessons to his own practice.

"I'm in the conflict business," says Murrie. "It's how you manage that conflict. How you do things is just as important as what you do."

After two years with Kerrick, Murrie made a life-changing decision: He moved to Nashville, Tenn., to be closer to his future wife, Katherine. It meant taking the Tennessee bar and it was in the midst of the Great Recession in 2008 so opportunities were limited, but Murrie found exactly what he was looking for — in a spouse and a job.

"Sometimes you've just got to get a little lucky," he says with a smile.

He and his wife, Katherine, who works in finance, now have two young daughters and live in East Nashville, an older neighborhood just outside of the downtown area.

Cornelius & Collins, LLP, turned out to be the precise type of mid-size firm Murrie wanted to work for, offering a similar experience to his one at the firm in Bowling Green.

When he arrived in Nashville, Murrie says he was surprised to find that the city's legal community had a small-town feel.

"Even though it was a big city and you had big city practice, it was still a very collegial bar," he says. "It's a welcoming community that works well together."

The scope of Cornelius & Collins' practice is broad, and over



Jason Murrie and his wife, Katherine, enjoy time together and the scenery at a Primerus event in Napa Valley.

the past six decades its lawyers have handled thousands of cases in state and federal courts. Historically, the firm has always been around 10-20 attorneys. That's intentional. The firm manages its growth in anticipation of future needs.

"We want to be large enough to provide our clients what they need, but we still want to know each other," says Murrie. "We want a family atmosphere. We don't want to get so big that we're on multiple floors of a building."

As a member of Primerus™, Murrie says Cornelius & Collins is able to compete with the larger regional or national firms that have opened offices in Nashville.

"We have the same capabilities and reach," he says. "Being able to provide that pitch to clients and potential clients, we can show them that they don't need to go with some big law firm down the block."

Murrie, who was elected to partnership in 2014, currently serves on the firm's three-member executive committee as well as its marketing committee. He previously also chaired the recruiting committee. His practice is concentrated on premises cases, construction litigation, business litigation, personal injury, transportation, and insurance coverage.

He is a firm believer in helping clients be proactive against potential future litigation. Much of his practice now involves consulting with entrepreneurs as they build their businesses,

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focusing on risk management and forethought.

"I've seen what happens when the house is on fire and we're trying to deal with the hand that we've been dealt," says Murrie, who advises his clients that the upfront investment will hopefully save them on the backend. "Clients want that counseling. I think that's a value a lot of people are seeing."

In some sense, Murrie's role as an attorney can be compared to the role he played behind the plate during his baseball years. As the catcher, he became skilled at managing the pitcher, directing the flow of the game, interacting with opposing hitters, and serving as a buffer with the umpire.

"I think that's probably why I enjoyed catching as much as I did," he says. "You're in a position to really put the plan together and implement the plan."

He adds with a grin, "When I went out on the mound to pitch, though, I called my own pitches."



Attorney Jason Murrie (right) attended Primerus' Global Conference last year and had the chance to socialize with John Pearce of the Gordon Arata law firm in New Orleans and Caroline Berube of the HJM Asia Law & Co. in Guangzhou, China.