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Litigator Says Time Spent on Playing Field Makes Him a Better Lawyer

By Charles Toutant

Litigator Eric Katz is celebrating a victory against a formidable adversary, but his latest win was not in any courtroom.

On July 22, Katz, of Mazie Slater Katz & Freeman in Roseland, coached a U.S. baseball team to a gold medal at the Maccabiah Games, the quadrennial event for Jewish athletes from around the world.

Katz's team, made up of 17- and 18-year-olds from across the U.S., was undefeated in five games at this year's event, which was capped off by an 11-2 win over Israel's team.

Katz, who often represents health care providers and patients in coverage disputes, has found being a coach helps him reduce stress.

"Being an attorney, both a trial attorney and an appellate advocate, there's a lot of pressure. I'm always involved with high-stakes cases. There's definitely a need for an outlet. I think it's a combination of recognizing that I need an outlet from the stress of professional life as well as recognizing that no matter how stressful your professional life is, being a mentor and a father figure fits into perspective what's most important. And I think, in turn, it allows you to be the best you can be professionally," Katz said.

"It's not easy to drop everything for three weeks and go to Israel, even in the middle of the summer. I have a very active practice. But it definitely is a stress



THE GOLD MEDAL-WINNING U.S. BASEBALL TEAM AT MACCABIAH GAMES.

reliever. I think it's very important for people to find something to do, especially in our profession. In that regard, I find it very beneficial," Katz said.

After coaching youth baseball teams in the U.S. and a junior team at the Maccabiah Games, getting to lead Team USA to a gold medal is the highlight of Katz's coaching career. Going forward, he has decided to hang up his coaching cleats after this year's victory and focus on being a spectator at his children's sports events, which are mainly hockey.

"This is my crowning achievement. I've been involved in amateur baseball for 20 years. I've coached numerous occasions on the national level. I was always looking to get appointed to this position

because this was the highest position I could get. From this point going forward, I'll be content to sit on the sidelines and watch," Katz said.

Katz's gold medal team, made up of 17 athletes who were selected in tryouts last summer, include many who are committed to play Division 1 or Division 2 college baseball next year.

This year President Joe Biden became the first U.S. president to attend the Maccabiah Games' opening ceremony. More than 1,400 U.S. athletes competed in more than 40 sports, including basketball, cricket, field hockey, fencing and table tennis.

In 2013, Katz scored a 9-0 victory at the U.S. Supreme Court in *Oxford Health*



ERIC KATZ OF MAZIE SLATER KATZ & FREEMAN AT THE MACCABIAH GAMES.

Plans v. Sutter, which upheld an arbitrator's award authorizing class arbitration of a dispute over a health plan's failure to make prompt payments to doctors.

Combatants in both sports and litigation end up as either winners or losers, but losing in baseball might be harder to accept than a defeat in court, Katz said.

"No one likes to lose, whether in law or in sports. In this stage of my career, fortunately, I don't lose too often in litigation," he said. "In sports, especially when you coach at the amateur level, the concern is how are they [the players] going to take it. I feel it's out of my control, but it's also a good lesson in life. Everybody's got to learn that not everything works out the way they hoped for." ■