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DEAL MAKER

Robyn Glaser '89 makes it happen for The Kraft Group and New England Patriots

By Gerry Boyle '78

The business card says Robyn Glaser '89 is vice president, The Kraft Group, and club counsel, New England Patriots. So ... what does that mean? That's different from being an actual lawyer, Glaser is quick to point out.

A self-described jack-of-all-trades, Glaser does deals for The Kraft Group, including multi-million dollar strategic partnerships with media and technology companies and others, while also drafting player contracts, most recently the one for tackle Marcus Cannon (\$32 million over five years, signed just prior to our conversation) and overseeing the business operations of Kraft Sports Productions, the full-service production company and state-of-the-art studio housed at Gillette Stadium.

"I really call myself a fake lawyer," Glaser said, sitting in her office in the administrative wing at Gillette Stadium, a stone's throw from the offices of her bosses, Patriots owners Robert and Jonathan Kraft. "I don't want to step on the toes of the real lawyers, the real general counsel here. ... But I am the lawyer for the football team. That's the 'law' I do."

Not bad for someone who admits that before she was hired by the Krafts 10 years ago she'd never watched an entire football game. "If it was football or *Project Runway*, it was *Project Runway* all the time," she said.

That was then.

Today she sits at the epicenter of one of the world's most successful professional sports enterprises, and Glaser knows the National Football League collective bargaining agreement backward and forward. Her name was front and center during the NFL incident known as Deflategate, in which the Patriots and quarterback Tom Brady were accused of intentionally deflating footballs in the 2015 NFL playoffs. Brady was suspended for four games at the start of the 2016 season by NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell. "Personally, as someone who was at the table during the Wells [Report] investigation process (the NFL's internal investigation of the allegations), I believe there was mishandling by the league," Glaser said.

She oversees and advises on business acquisitions, technology, and investments for the Patriots and the rest of The Kraft Group operations (the privately owned company's businesses include sports and entertainment, paper and packaging, and construction and real estate development), arranges strategic partnerships, and oversees philanthropic initiatives. As Glaser recounts, during her job interview with Kraft Group President Jonathan Kraft, he asked if she could do deals. "I said, 'In my sleep.'"



If there are any impediments to my success, I really don't notice because I don't care. I'm just going to blaze on and do it."

—Robyn Glaser '89

Not that she slept much as she was learning the ropes.

After churning her way through Colby's government and economics departments, Glaser moved directly to Washington University in St. Louis, where she simultaneously earned her M.B.A. and J.D. degrees. Her next stop was the New York office of the global law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton, & Garrison, where she got an additional four-year education, she said. "I'd look at the sheets and see which partner had deals that seemed cool to me. I'd knock on their doors and volunteer to work that weekend."

The tactic worked, as she was involved in deals involving clients ranging from Major League Baseball to Calvin Klein. When the firm was tapped to do one of the first music-streaming deals, Glaser got the nod. "I had touched every single type of deal out there, in a million different industries. When I had to figure out how we were going to proceed in a nascent market that no one knew anything about, I had a wealth of information about how I could potentially structure things," Glaser said.

Success there landed her in Los Angeles, at the music conglomerate EMI, where she was vice president for a

team that developed strategy for emerging media and technology, from ringtones to digital downloads. Later she would see her phrasing in other labels' contracts. "I saw them right away," she said. "Robynisms."

It was a fast track, especially for a young woman in male-dominated industries. "If there are any impediments to my success, I really don't notice because I don't care," Glaser said. "I'm just going to blaze on and do it."

But she didn't always exude confidence, she said. Early at Colby, she played lacrosse, but was lonely, unhappy, and overweight (now she's a fitness enthusiast and proponent of Brady's TB12 fitness and nutrition program). "I was just very lost," she said. She persevered, tackled academics, went abroad to study economics at the University of Sussex in England, and left Mayflower Hill with a sense of independence and capability.

Those are two qualities she's brought to every job, including with the Patriots. She said she prides herself on her ability to find new ways to accomplish very complex tasks, whether they're player contracts, licensing deals, or big-money charity events. "My answer is never no," she said. "If there's no direct route to getting there, we'll find a way."