

Rising Star: Knobbe Martens' Hans Mayer

By **Tiffany Hu**

Law360 (June 19, 2023, 4:07 PM EDT) -- Hans Mayer of Knobbe Martens helped drink maker Orange Bang secure a \$175 million victory in a trademark dispute over energy drinks, earning him a spot among the intellectual property law practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

HIS BIGGEST CASE:

Mayer represented Orange Bang Inc., which teamed up with Monster Energy in bringing claims against rival Vital Pharmaceuticals or VPX for breaching a prior settlement between Orange Bang and VPX and infringing its "Bang" trademarks with VPX's Bang energy drinks.

Following an eight-day arbitration, the arbitrator in 2021 ruled in favor of Orange Bang and Monster on their claims against VPX. In April 2022, a California federal judge affirmed the companies' arbitration win and ordered Vital to pay \$175 million and a 5% future royalty for the use of the "Bang" mark for energy drinks. VPX filed for bankruptcy months later.

In addition to the trademark award being one of the largest, the case also involves a family business that dates back to the early 1970s.

"The stakes were more than money — this is something they've built over a long time," Mayer said. "I think that win made them feel so good to be vindicated, and it was a fantastic experience for us to be able to help them protect the brand that they spent so long building."

HIS PROUDEST MOMENT:

Mayer, who began his career at Knobbe Martens as a summer associate, said that it had been an "internal goal" of his to make partner at the firm by age 30 — a milestone he hit when he was promoted in 2020.

2023



Hans Mayer
Knobbe Martens

Age: 34

Home base: Los Angeles

Position: Partner

Law school: Loyola Law School

First job after law school:
Associate at Knobbe Martens

He also recalls a moment earlier in his legal career when he was selected to be part of the firm's Trial Attorney Partnership program with the Orange County District Attorney's office.

"That was such a fantastic experience, especially in IP Land, where there are plenty of trials, but you're not in court every day — but for a few months, I was literally in front of the judge almost every single day," Mayer said.

Mayer said that a highlight from that experience was when he got to do a misdemeanor jury completely by himself. From "junior associate, senior associate, lead counsel — you name it, every position, I was all on my own, and it was a blast," he said.

WHY HE'S AN IP ATTORNEY:

Mayer said that his interest in the law first stemmed from his father, who had been a trial lawyer at the district attorney's office, and his mother, who was a court reporter for criminal courts.

Later on, as an undergraduate biomedical engineering major, Mayer said he took a memorable class on organ replacements, and that it had been "fascinating and mind-blowing" to see how far technology had come and continues to push forward.

"I saw IP law as a very nice intersection of the litigation aspects I'd seen growing up, with the engineering and innovation that I'd come to love in college and studied," he said. "That was sort of a very natural way to combine those two things that I was really interested in."

HOW HIS PRACTICE WILL CHANGE IN 10 YEARS:

While no one can predict the future, Mayer cites the "ever-evolving landscape" of patent and trademark litigation and "all of its ebbs and flows" as the fun part of being an intellectual property litigator. Being technology-focused means seeing "all the new stuff as it comes out" and sometimes being able to litigate it, he added.

"The law is always evolving, and I think that's what keeps the job fun," Mayer said. "You gotta be committed to learning and staying on top of things — but that's why I come into work every day; it's always interesting, and you're always learning something new."

— As told to Tiffany Hu.

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2023 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,350 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of May 1, 2023, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.