



## ALUMNI PROFILE :

### Mark McNabola

(LAS '81, JD '84)

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## Double Demon Mark McNabola knows what it takes to succeed both on the court and in the courtroom.

In his youth, McNabola was a member of the state champion rugby team, the city pole vault champ and a point guard on Loyola Academy's 1976 basketball team. He also was a preferred walk-on under DePaul's legendary basketball coach Ray Meyer. "I was a multisport guy," he says. "Sports taught me about the connection between hard work and strategies to achieve results you can be proud of, but also that when you're out of shape and not confident, how it can be very frustrating."

McNabola, an avid Blue Demons fan and supporter, feels a sense of gratitude and pride for DePaul athletics. His father William (LAS '47) played under then-new head coach Meyer, on the 1945 team that won the National Invitation Tournament. His father's experience influenced Mark's decision to attend DePaul, and eventually the College of Law. Though he transferred to Northern Arizona University to see more playing time on the court, McNabola returned to DePaul graduating with degrees in English and communications.

Yet, DePaul athletics is not the earliest connection in this Blue Demon's blood. Today, McNabola lives in the row houses just down the street from the St. Vincent de Paul Parish, the eventual home of St. Vincent's College in Lincoln Park. His great-great-uncle, Rev. Edward Smith, C.M., helped build the church in the late 1800s. "There's the idea of being connected to a community," he says. "I didn't realize the extent of this when I was a student, but it's important today."

Now a leading plaintiff's personal injury lawyer at McNabola Law Group in Chicago, McNabola's successes in the courtroom outshine his more youthful victories on the court. He recently received the Jury Verdict Reporter's 2011 Award for Trial Excellence, and as the youngest attorney to receive this honor, he joins an elite group of only 10 attorneys in the past 25 years to receive five jury verdicts of \$5 million or more.

In a 2009 Leading Lawyers article, McNabola's colleagues describe him as having a passion and belief in his cases that comes through in the courtroom. On living up to this reputation, McNabola says, "It's a blessing and curse that I want to do things the right way, and I've worked hard to achieve that. The results I've had in the courtroom are not by luck, but by fear," he laughs, adding, "And hard work."

As a hard-working law student at DePaul, McNabola says he benefited from the teaching of highly accomplished and brilliant lawyers and judges who were his professors. He thrived in the small class setting that night school offered and appreciated the experience of listening to professors like Judge William Bauer, Dan Webb, Len Cavise and Cherif Bassiouni. While at the College of Law, McNabola worked as sheriff's deputy at the Daley Center, which introduced him to litigation and attorneys' courtroom styles. "I was able to watch some of the best courtroom lawyers in the city," he says. McNabola interned at the U.S. attorney's office after graduation, working in the federal prosecutor's office for less than a year before landing a job at a personal injury trial firm.

McNabola says he had no idea when in school that he would get into personal injury law—but it's clear he relishes its challenging nature. "There is nothing that comes close to looking in the eyes of your clients after a successful jury verdict. When the foreman steps over and delivers the final verdict, which you have been working with your clients for years to achieve, and it's a favorable verdict. In that moment time almost stands still. It's the best feeling in the world."

However, he acknowledges that the stakes have changed since his youth. "The reality of my practice is that I deal with people that are devastated in almost every way imaginable—emotionally, financially, physically, mentally," he says, "and the reason that I continue to have drive in this type of practice, which is all consuming, is that I know that I'm giving back to less fortunate people."

Even when he isn't so successful, McNabola perseveres down the path of continuous improvement. He credits his colleagues and jurors for giving him the feedback necessary to improve. "I surround myself with people who contribute and criticize my work product until I get it right," he says. "I always call myself an aspiring trial lawyer because I have a lot to learn, and I learn every time out at trial."

Particularly in McNabola's area of law practice, he recognizes an element of sportsmanship. "Lawyers in Chicago know each other and trust each other," he explains. "And, contrary to popular belief, we have civility towards one another. The types of professional relationships that develop and the mutual respect we have for each other will carry on for decades."