

THE PRIMERUS 180

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Member Spotlight

For eight years in the 1980s and 1990s, Lee Dresie was the only practicing lawyer also working as an NCAA basketball coach. Looking back on it, this lifelong basketball enthusiast credits the experience with fulfilling a dream as well as making him a better lawyer.

Dresie, a litigator at Primerus member firm Greenburg Glusker in Los Angeles, California, worked from 1985 to 1994 as the junior varsity and assistant varsity basketball coach at Claremont McKenna College, a highly selective liberal arts college just outside of Los Angeles. When he started coaching at Claremont, he was a junior attorney in his third year at Greenberg Glusker.

“Coaching helped me as a lawyer,” said Dresie. “As a litigator, I need to get up and persuade people. I found that having to coach 12 intelligent 20-year-olds every day in practice and in games essentially was a public speaking class day after day. I found that going into court and arguing a motion to a judge or a case to a jury was much easier. The fear of public speaking that we all have when we start in this job totally disappeared.”

Dresie’s coaching dream was possible because of the flexibility of his law firm, he said. The firm granted flexible schedules to attorneys for family related situations, as well as for teaching law classes at local colleges and universities, so firm leadership decided Dresie’s situation was no different.

From October to March every year, Dresie worked in the law office as an associate from 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. before driving the 40 miles to Claremont McKenna for practice and games.

“I was able to work with true student athletes, so the fact that I worked as an attorney gave me credibility with the players,” Dresie said.

Dresie’s love of basketball started as a young child, and he went on to play high school basketball in Connecticut and college basketball at Haverford College outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. While he was in law school at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and as a lawyer, he played in lawyers’ leagues and city leagues throughout Los Angeles.

His college coach told him to think about coaching. “I was always fairly analytical about the game, which translated into studying the game,”

Dresie said. “A natural outgrowth of that was wanting to coach it. My fear was that it would take the joy out of the game if I had to get more analytical about it. It turned out to be the opposite. The more I learned about the game, the more I appreciated its fine points.”

After eight years of coaching, Dresie was an 11th year attorney and was married with children. He decided it was time to stop his coaching job and focus on his law career fulltime. To this day, he continues to play basketball twice a week and enjoys blogging about basketball at <http://leesfakeblog.blogspot.com/>. He also remains active with the Claremont McKenna basketball program.

Dresie has watched his former players grow up to have successful careers of their own. It gives him special joy to note that many of his players are doing what he did, both succeeding in business and coaching basketball at all different levels. “The fact that my players continue to love the game and give back to it is very satisfying,” Dresie said. P



Lee Dresie

