



**Robert Collins III**  
Latham & Watkins

Bloomberg Law

# They've Got Next: The 40 Under 40 – Robert Collins III of Latham & Watkins

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By Lisa Helem, Executive Editor

## Robert Collins III

**Age:** 39

**Law Firm:** Latham & Watkins

**Practice Area:** Products Liability

**Title:** Partner

**Location:** Chicago

**Law School:** Harvard Law School

### **Please describe two of your most substantial, recent wins in practice.**

I served as co-lead counsel for The Dow Chemical Company in a six-week jury trial in San Francisco in 2023 that secured a complete defense verdict after more than 25 years of litigation, defeating a demand for millions in compensatory and punitive damages.

The City of Modesto alleged that Dow sold a dry-cleaning chemical that caused contamination of the city's soil and groundwater, and the city asserted product liability and nuisance claims. After examining city, expert, and third-party witnesses before the jury, I was thrilled we convinced the jury that Dow's actions had not caused the city any harm.

I represented Weyerhaeuser in connection with class and individual litigation related to a formaldehyde safety coating on floor joists used in new home construction. After we successfully resolved 10 nationwide consumer class actions seeking hundreds of millions in damages, I then represented Weyerhaeuser in a jury trial in Colorado state court brought by homebuilders seeking tens of millions in damages and lost profits. After long nights and weekends, we defeated most claims at trial and then knocked out the remaining claims on appeal.

I have represented Netflix in 15 class action lawsuits alleging that the way Netflix content is delivered to customers requires Netflix to pay franchise fees, thus threatening to impose increased fees on Netflix customers. We defeated these cases before 20 courts, including the Ohio and Tennessee Supreme Courts, the US Courts of Appeal for the Third, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Circuits, and the appellate courts of California, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas. I have truly enjoyed the opportunity, especially arguing before appellate panels around the country.

### **What is the most important lesson you learned as a first-year attorney and how does it inform your practice today?**

Take ownership of every task in front of you, however big or small. Complex litigation is a team sport, and every task—document review, research, drafting, depositions, oral argument, etc.—is a critical building block in the success of the team and thus the client. If you take ownership of the tasks you are given and perform them to the best of your ability, you not only maximize your client's likelihood of success, but you also ensure that you will continue to be given greater opportunities and to grow in your profession.

### **How do you define success in your practice?**

I am successful in my practice if I work with my clients to define what success in litigation looks like to them and then help them achieve those goals. The type of litigation we handle often poses tremendous risk to a client's ongoing business and future financial outlook, and the vision of mitigating or avoiding that risk can vary.

For some clients, the best solution is an early class settlement combined with maximum insurance recovery. For others, it is aggressive litigation, aimed at winning

on motion practice, before a jury, or at the appellate level. Understanding—and then advancing—client needs is key.

### **What are you most proud of as a lawyer?**

I am most proud of the fact that I have been able to use my skills to help solve my clients' biggest legal challenges. That has included helping Netflix defeat more than a dozen class action lawsuits seeking to impose new fees on Netflix subscriptions and Dow with litigation that has been pending for more than 25 years.

I am also proud of having helped pro bono clients, including prosecuting a class action that resulted in better living conditions for over 1,000 inmates, obtaining better medical care and ultimate release for an inmate confined to a wheelchair, and helping students with disabilities obtain accommodations their schools otherwise refused to provide.

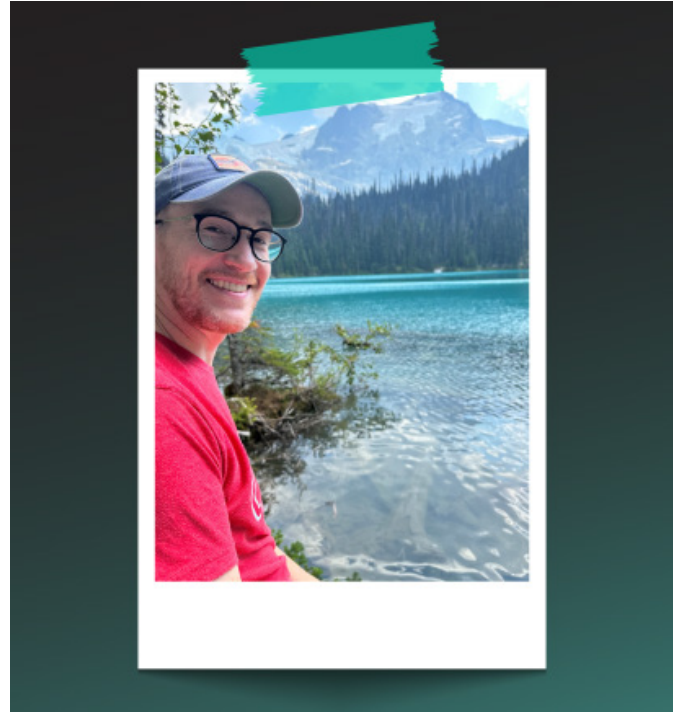
### **Who is your greatest mentor in the law and what have they taught you?**

My greatest mentor has been and continues to be Mary Rose Alexander. Mary Rose is an amazing litigator and trial attorney who thinks strategically and long-term, works better with a witness than anyone else I have seen, and knows how to keep focus on the mission critical tasks notwithstanding the distractions along the way.

But beyond Mary Rose's tremendous skill as a lawyer, she has shown me how this job can be done not only first-rate, but also with humanity, empathy, and kindness for everyone involved. She truly cares about all team members and colleagues and knows how to respect each person's unique talents and needs, while also producing exceptional results for clients. I strive to replicate all of these traits.

### **Tell us your two favorite songs on your summer music playlist.**

"Simply the Best"—a great, upbeat song that always prompts a live duet with a legend—and "Can't Stop the Feeling!"—a lighthearted song with the perfect vibe for a day in the sun!



*Robert Collins III of Latham & Watkins at Joffre Lakes Park outside Whistler, in British Columbia, Canada. Credit: Steven Lagocki and Jonathan Hurtarte/Bloomberg Law*