Alum Jamie McCourt realized every baseball lover’s dream when she put her legal mind to work in service of the L.A. Dodgers. 

BY GARY LIBMAN

Growing up as a rabid baseball fan in Baltimore, Jamie McCourt regularly dragged her father to Baltimore Orioles games. Her favorite player was shortstop Luis Aparicio, and she can still tell you the number of almost every starter on the famous 1966 team. She was thrilled that season when the Orioles defeated the Los Angeles Dodgers and the great Sandy Koufax in the World Series.

McCourt (’79) also followed the game avidly at the University of Maryland School of Law, matriculating as Jamie Luskin, and throughout a twenty-five-year legal and business career in New York and Boston.

Then, in January 2004, she achieved the ultimate baseball fantasy: she and her husband, Boston commercial real estate developer Frank McCourt, bought the Dodgers. Now she counts Koufax as a friend, along with two other Dodger members of the Hall of Fame—former manager Tommy Lasorda and announcer Vin Scully.

Sitting recently in her Dodger Stadium office, overlooking the emerald green left field grass, the highest ranking female executive in baseball says that owning a team is "sensational. I always say I never worked so hard and never had so much fun. There are so many different things to work on that you are never, ever bored. It’s a 365-day-a-year, 24-hour-a-day job."
In her first season as an owner, the Dodgers won the National League West division and their first playoff game since 1988. Between the 2004 and 2005 seasons, the busy McCourts sought to increase revenue by adding 1,600 high-priced seats close to the field. They changed the face of the mezzanine section by installing a three-foot high "ribbon board" to display baseball information and advertising. As vice chairman of the team, Jamie McCourt is in the thick of these and a hundred other ongoing decisions. She oversees all business operations, including day-to-day management, strategic planning, and the integration of business and baseball operations.

Integrating business and baseball operations, she says, is important in making the team "fan friendly": "It's really apparent that the best way to do that is to get players into the community and have them sign autographs and meet people. It's important for the players to be mindful of how much it means to fans to be accessible."

"There's not a single thing we do that is not about making our product better for the fans," she says, "and that includes stadium renovations, making tickets easier to purchase, and putting more ATM machines in here. Our whole business is driven by what's important to the customer, and the fan is our customer."

"I always envisioned that this is what I would do [with the team], because this is my skill set," the small, slender McCourt says, surrounded by pictures of her family and bowls of M&M's. "I've always been a strategic thinker and involved with finding solutions."

Attending University of Maryland Law honed those skills and more. On her first day in Contracts class, McCourt's professor saw the name "Jamie Luskin" and directed a question to "Mr. Luskin."

"My answer was, 'I'm not Mr. Luskin," Jamie Luskin McCourt recalls. But professors soon learned who she was. One professor, Bill Reynolds, remembers, "Jamie was a memorable student, as well as a delightful one. She questioned everything I said, and she did it with an unusual amount of ability and humor. She really helped make the class work."

And the curriculum proved invaluable. "It teaches you to ask the right questions," McCourt says. "It puts you in a place where you can assimilate a lot of facts and really determine what the issues are. It's a great skill set to have, and it's a great discipline to have, and it makes you listen better."

After graduation, McCourt polished these skills, specializing in international and securities law at a New York law firm. Moving to Boston, she focused on corporate, real estate, and family law in private practice. She also spent four years "of counsel" to a Boston law firm before joining The McCourt Company as vice president and general counsel in 1994.

Wherever she's been employed, even when she's immersed in her job, McCourt has worked hard to create time for her family. The McCourts have four sons: Drew, twenty-three; Travis, twenty-two; Casey, eighteen; and Gavin, fifteen.

"You do the best you can," she says, carefully considering her responses as she sips her coffee. "We're a really close family. We try to have dinner together every night, and if we need to be at the ballpark, the kids are often here with us."

"You don't think about it," she continues. "You go through life doing what you want to do, and have to do, the best you can. I try to be the best mother, best wife, and best person I know how to be. And I'm lucky that I don't need much sleep."

The oldest two sons explored Los Angeles before they made the decision to move; her oldest, Drew, joined the team a year ago in business development, and recently was promoted to director of marketing. The other sons also plan to provide a different perspective. It's also a reminder to people that there are a lot of different constituencies and opportunities that we should and need to pay attention to."

"I'm one of those who believe that as a woman you can do it all: you just might not be able to do it all at once," she says. "And I think it's important for people to embrace that."

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