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Eight years out of law school, Goodwin helped create his boutique litigation firm focused on representing major companies facing high-stakes, complex class action litigation.

He and his colleagues are particularly skilled at getting rid of putative class actions against their clients while avoiding class-wide settlements. “We position cases strategically, typically leveraging really strong filings ... to obtain individual settlements,” Goodwin said.

He is especially proud of his work over the last year defending American Honda Motor Co. from a trio of class actions across the country alleging the carmaker used defective fuel pumps. The first was filed in Alabama last May, the next in Los Angeles that June and the third in New Jersey in September. “My client was facing the daunting prospect of having to wage a multi-front defense across three different jurisdictions,” Goodwin said.

He first won a stay of the Los Angeles lawsuit by equating it to the earlier Alabama lawsuit. “We argued that the case should be dismissed or stayed based upon the first to file rule, because the cases were substantially similar, even though they asserted different claims and state subclasses,” he said.

He used the same approach to persuade the New Jersey plaintiffs to transfer their case to Alabama. This June, Goodwin filed a motion to dismiss all 78 causes of action in the plaintiffs’ new consolidated complaint.

Oliver v. Honda Motor Co. Ltd., 5:20-cv-00666 (N.D. Ala., filed May 11, 2020).

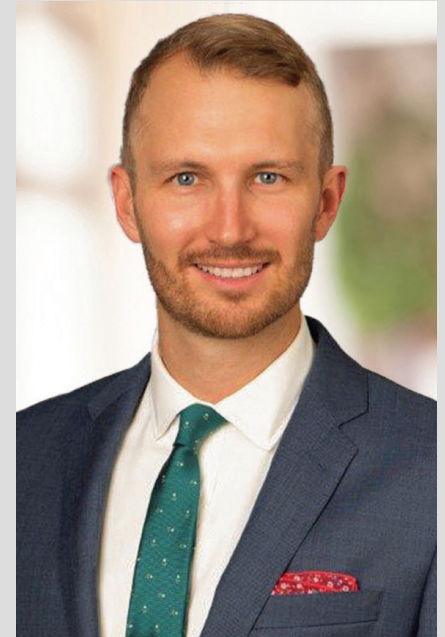
In August, Goodwin won individual settlements in a separate pair of potential class actions against American Honda over the company’s portable generators. “At DTO, we’ve had great success avoiding class-wide settlements. Our record is perfect in that regard,” he said.

He did even better defending Costco Wholesale Corp. and a manufacturer from a putative class action. He showed that the lead plaintiff, a former employee of the manufacturer, was decidedly not typical, prompting her to dismiss her lawsuit. *Rivas v. Costco Wholesale Corp.*, 8:18-cv-00729 (C.D. Cal., filed April 27, 2018).

Before DTO, Goodwin helped win a published decision in a tangled employee misclassification case upholding his client’s third attempt to remove the putative class action from state to federal court. “It was stacked against us, really, because we had to ... run the table in the Ninth Circuit [on three grounds] in order to win,” he said. “We were really pleased with the result.” *Rea v. Michaels Stores Inc.*, 742 F.3d 1234 (9th Cir. 2014).

But what he called the most gratifying success of his career was winning asylum for a girl who at the age of 12 had fled labor and sex slavery in El Salvador. “It was an awful situation, and it was really gratifying to get asylum granted for her,” he said.

— Don DeBenedictis



JUSTIN T. GOODWIN

DTO LAW

LOS ANGELES

CLASS ACTION DEFENSE

AGE: 38