

## Top Boutiques of 2015

GIANT SLAYERS: THE SMALL, HYPER-FOCUSED LAW FIRMS THAT TAKE ON BIG MATTERS AND WIN

### PRODUCT LIABILITY



Alexander Drecon / Special to the Daily Journal

From left, Cristina Ciminelli, Todd Cavanaugh, Thomas Borncamp, Steven Smelser and James Yukevich

## Yukevich | Cavanaugh

### LOS ANGELES

For the last 20 years, co-founders Jim Yukevich and Todd Cavanaugh have approached every case as if it will go trial because they know there are no half-measures in litigation.

“When we look at the case, we look at everything,” Yukevich said. “We look at the facts, we look at the experts, we look to see if there is liability on behalf of our clients while understanding that case may not always be resolved in court.”

Attorneys at Yukevich Cavanaugh specialize in the defense of

Fortune 500 companies in complex product liability cases that include automobiles, construction equipment, tires, automotive friction products, helmets and industrial machinery.

Yukevich Cavanaugh staffs at least two partners on every trial, each armed with a strategy honed in the fire and forge of experience. Yukevich describes himself, and the attorneys he works with, as prepared, focused and strategic in their methods.

“Even if you know our playbook, you can’t stop us from running our plays,” he said.

For the clients they represent, the firm believes that defense counsel cannot be actively en-

gaged on the other side. Yukevich says that although him and his firm’s attorneys understand what it’s like to be a plaintiff, he believes that the firm’s most effective position is rooted in defense.

“What that boils down to is when we try a case, we really believe a product is not defective in design,” he said.

In pursuit of resolving high stakes product liability cases, the firm has developed a unique intersection of knowledge between law, engineering and medicine. Last year, Yukevich Cavanaugh was featured by the Daily Journal for receiving one of the top defense verdicts of the year with a case involving helmets used in

high school football. In that case, a high school football lineman suffered serious brain injuries after being hit by an opposing player. Yukevich Cavanaugh successfully defended the helmet maker, Riddell.

“These companies are highly recognized,” Cavanaugh said. “They have a brand and an identity to protect and they have a lot of experience in the products they make.”

In a separate case filed in 2013, the firm is defending the engine manufacturer for an industrial-sized wood chipper after an accident involving an explosion that killed one person and seriously injured three others.

Many more of their clients however, are automotive manufacturers, including Ford Motor Co. In 2011, a family sued for the death of their mother after alleging the right rear tire, the vehicle and the seatbelt were all defective and caused her death. Trial is scheduled for early February 2016.

Inside the firm’s office, more than 40 pictures of courtrooms all across the nation hang in the hallways. Each represents a place where the firm has taken a trial to verdict. For the attorneys at the firm, the photographs are more than a reminder of their victories, they are a reminder of the principles that have brought the firm success.

“We try our hardest to protect our clients that produce outstanding products,” Cavanaugh said.

— Ryan Van Velzer