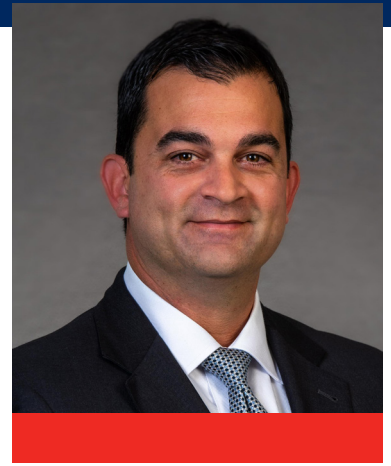


# Lifelong competitive spirit fuels attorney's desire for excellence



By Brian Cox

When the U.S. men's soccer team pulled off a stunning 2-1 upset over Colombia in the 1994 World Cup, attorney Gus Themelis was a rising senior in high school, and he remembers hopping on his bicycle to ride down Coastal Highway in Ocean City, Md., chanting "USA!" at the top of his lungs.

He was alone in his exuberance. Most people didn't care.

"There was no energy in this country for soccer like there is now," says Themelis, who has loved the sport since he was a child. "Growing up, I struggled to find a game on television. Now, there's so much soccer on TV in the restaurants and bars. To see how much the sport has grown over my lifetime has just been really awesome."



**Gus played D1 soccer for Loyola University Maryland. His senior year in high school, his team won the league championship and he was named to the All-Metro and All-County teams.**

Born and raised in Baltimore, Themelis recalls with nostalgic fondness playing pickup soccer in the neighborhood until the church bells signaled it was time to go home for dinner.

"Kids don't do that anymore," he says. "Now they all play organized sports."

In addition to playing on a travel soccer team, Themelis played for his school's team all four years at Calvert Hall College High School, an all-boys preparatory school in Towson, Md., with a reputable soccer program and a legendary coach, Bill Karpovich. Themelis made the All-Metro and All-County teams his senior year, during which Calvert Hall won the league championship.

"Winning that championship was pretty special," recalls Themelis, who was thrilled to receive the gold corduroy sports coat the school traditionally presented to athletes who were part of a championship team. "The day that we got those, I took that thing home and I grabbed a glue gun, and I glued on my varsity letters, and I wore that the next day because I always wanted the gold jacket and wanted to wear it right away."

Themelis went on to play Division I soccer at Loyola University Maryland. He says the path that he took to playing D1 ball is now almost "Mission Impossible."

"The days of just being a good athlete and being able to make the team are long gone," he says. "There are now so many talented kids that play high school ball. There are more kids than there are spots on high school teams."

His former high school soccer team now carries 33 players on the roster and recently ranked No. 1 in the country, recording an undefeated season.

Intent on sharing his passion for soccer, Themelis now coaches his own kids and is president of the Baltimore Union Soccer Club, which is a youth soccer program that offers hundreds of children the opportunity to play at an affordable cost. The Baltimore Union Soccer Club stands in contrast to what Themelis calls the "silk-stocking, pay-to-play" clubs that have cropped up as the popularity of soccer has climbed in the past few decades.

"I felt an obligation to be president of the club and keep it going because it provides a real service for kids who want more than a rec experience and may not be able to make their high school team," says Themelis. "We've got the right people in place to

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run the club now, but there was a time when there wasn't. I'm very proud I was able to do that. It was a lot of work."

Themelis and his wife, Thalia, met during their senior year in high school. They married the month after he took the bar exam in 2002. She is a registered nurse who shares Themelis's Greek heritage. His grandparents were born in Greece, while Thalia's parents were born there. She grew up speaking Greek at home. The couple have three children. Their oldest son, Dimitri, is a sophomore at University of Maryland at College Park, where he is studying business and considering law school. Their daughter Sophia is a junior in high school, and their youngest daughter, Joanna, is in middle school.

Just as soccer has been an integral part of Themelis's life, so has the law. His father, John C. Themelis, was a judge with the Baltimore City Circuit Court for more than two decades. Themelis remembers being in the courthouse over summer break as a teenager and lawyers occasionally asking in jest if his father was as hard on him as he was on the lawyers.

"I would joke back and say he's harder on me," says Themelis with a laugh. "My dad was a pretty strict judge, known for being no-nonsense. That's the way he was wired. He had an amazing reputation as a judge. I really wish he would have run for mayor of Baltimore City. He was a legendary judge respected by all and could have helped the city a lot."

His father encouraged Themelis to pursue whatever career he might want, but made it clear he would be especially proud if his son became a lawyer.

"So, it was always my aspiration and something I always wanted to do," says Themelis.

Themelis attended the University of Baltimore School of Law after graduating from Loyola. He knew early on that he wanted to be a trial attorney and planned to start at either the State Attorney's Office or the Public Defender's Office to gain courtroom experience.

"My dad basically said to me, look, as a trial attorney you can always make a living. If your firm turns to you and says, 'we don't need you...get out'; you can hang a shingle and make a living with those skills," says Themelis.

As it turned out, he fell into a job working in-house for State Farm, which provided him "a ton" of trial experience. For the first two years with State Farm, he was the youngest attorney in the office, and everyone wanted to mentor him, routinely inviting him to try jury trials with them. Themelis said "yes" as often as possible and was mentored by some talented litigators.

"I gained a comfort level in front of judges and juries until I felt I could try a jury trial any day of the week," he says.

Given his lifelong love of soccer, it seems only natural that Themelis compares gaining expertise in the courtroom with developing confidence on the soccer field.

"The more you play, the more you develop a relationship with the ball," he says. "You get more comfortable with the ball on your foot. The game slows down, and you can be more strategic about how you play."

The same is true for trying a case in front of a judge or jury, says Themelis, who has successfully tried dozens of jury trials and hundreds of bench trials.

After four years with State Farm, Themelis joined a boutique litigation firm that was looking for an experienced trial attorney to help with its lead paint practice. He stayed with the firm 14 years, making partner and thinking he would retire from the firm. But lead paint litigation eventually dried up and the firm evolved around Themelis, leaving him feeling displaced.



**Gus Themelis is a seasoned Baltimore litigator with Thomas & Libowitz. He represents clients nationwide and has successfully tried dozens of jury trials and hundreds of bench trials.**

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When a former colleague from the firm encouraged him to join her at a much larger firm, Themelis decided to make the move. While he liked the firm and his colleagues, he discovered in short order that the firm's platform didn't suit his practice, and after two and a half years, he was ready for a change.

In April 2024, Themelis responded to a LinkedIn post from the managing partner of Thomas & Libowitz, P.A., who was looking for a seasoned trial attorney to manage its litigation department. Themelis immediately connected with Steve Thomas, who also is Greek and about the same age as Themelis's father.

"I have a lot in common with Steve," says Themelis. "I always wanted to practice with my father but that never worked out, and in a way, with Steve, I kind of feel like I'm working with my dad. I feel like I'm part of something here. This firm handles some pretty big matters and it's great to be a part of that."

The 15-lawyer firm has clients that include a variety of entrepreneurs, mid-sized companies, and well-established businesses, as well as some of the country's largest companies in the media, photography, auto, engineering, consulting, food, and commercial development industries.

"The firm is a known Baltimore brand," says Themelis. "A lot of people know Steve Thomas and like him. He has some very large, long-standing clients. A lot of the litigation from Steve's corporate clients will flow to the litigation department and that's kind of where I come in and where I feel I can be a real asset to the firm."

Themelis has tried a diverse book of cases. He represents a wide array of clients in state and federal courts in his commercial and business litigation practice, which includes franchise disputes, insurance litigation, commercial real estate development, construction claims and matters involving breach of contract, fraud, negligence, defamation, employment law, election law, medical malpractice, and maritime/admiralty.

"I've handled so many different types of cases at this firm," says Themelis. "There is virtually nothing I'll say no to. I love being busy,



**Gus and his wife, Thalia, with their children Joanna, Sophia, and Dmitri.**

and I love the challenges. I never guarantee victory to my clients, but I do give them comfort in telling them that I promise that they'll have their story told – win, lose or draw."

Themelis says he remains passionate about learning new law and being able to help people through complicated situations.

"A client said to me the other day that she felt that I was sent to her from God," he says. "When somebody tells you that they probably would have lost if they'd tried to do it without you, that's a good feeling."

It's a feeling right up there with receiving a cherished gold corduroy sportscoat after a championship season.