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Echeverria was in trial representing a truck driver who suffered a catastrophic injury when the pandemic shuttered the courts four days before closing arguments were scheduled.

The trial resumed in July of last year despite initial fears there would be a mistrial because of a lack of juror presence. Echeverria and his team prevailed despite the difficulties.

“I think there’s a lot of really decent human citizens with compassion who are willing to do their service under some very difficult circumstances,” Echeverria said. “The people that really deserve the most credit for that is those 12 jurors who came back after three and a half months during the pandemic. And they were given a lot of leeway to be excused if they wanted to, but they were all motivated to come back and finish the work.”

Despite face shields and jurors spread out across the courtroom, a jury awarded Echeverria’s client nearly \$8 million in medical and future loss of earnings damages. The jury found farming company Capay Inc. liable for the negligence of a forklift driver, who ran over Echeverria’s client’s right leg. Echeverria’s client is now an amputee as a result of the injuries. Judge Samuel T. McAdam presided over the trial. *Singh et al. v. Capay Inc.*,

17-2105 (Yolo County Sup. Ct., filed Dec. 12, 2017).

For a plaintiff’s lawyer, a closed courtroom could be devastating. And now, with courts opening up, lawyers have to deal with a challenging backlog. But Echeverria has managed to stay busy by finding creative ways to resolve matters, despite the pandemic.

“While we certainly benefit from having the courtrooms ready and open to try cases, we were still able to get some cases resolved by thinking outside the box,” Echeverria explained.

By working with the other side to identify key issues and come up with a high-low agreement, Echeverria said he was able to continue his work for clients, especially when both sides were motivated to settle.

“You would agree to have the case arbitrated before a retired judge,” Echeverria said. “And if you lost, you get the low. If you won, you got the high. So it was a way for both sides to streamline the issues in the case and get them resolved.”

Still, when asked for what he is looking forward to next, Echeverria answered quickly: “in-person jury trials.”

“And you can put that one in all caps with two exclamation points,” he said.

— Henrik Nilsson



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