

Douglas J. Shoemaker | Partner
Maritime

717 Texas Avenue
Houston, TX 77002
+1.713.632.8646
dshoemaker@blankrome.com



Douglas Shoemaker is a member of our Maritime Emergency Response Team (“MERT”).

Douglas focuses his practice on complex maritime transactions and litigation. He has over 25 years' experience advising clients on a wide range of maritime law topics, including charterparty negotiation and drafting, arbitration, vessel construction and flagging, purchase and sale, and mergers and acquisitions, personal injury, property damage, pollution, onboard investigations, navigational error, Jones Act, stevedoring accidents, cargo damage defense, and general average. He has particular experience in:

- Negotiating and drafting complex maritime agreements, including vessel construction, purchase and sale; time, voyage and bareboat charterparties; towage; contracts of affreightment; bills of lading; master services agreements; general terms and conditions; indemnity and insurance provisions
- Defending maritime personal injury and property damage cases in state and federal courts
- Arbitrations before the Society of Maritime Arbitrators in New York, the London Maritime Arbitrators Association, the Houston Maritime Arbitrators Association, the American Arbitrators Association, and JAMS
- Defending and prosecuting maritime seizure proceedings
- Insurance defense and coverage
- Domestic and international mergers and acquisitions, particularly concerning maritime assets and issues

Douglas has worked as a master mariner licensed by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Chambers USA states that clients describe Douglas as “very personable and very knowledgeable” and “thoughtful and pragmatic, while being very aggressive and thorough in terms of representation.” “One observer reports: ‘His greatest strengths are his practical application of his broad experience and an ability to identify the critical issues.’”

Outside The Firm

Douglas is an avid sailor, having grown up racing Star class, J-24s, and J-22s. He also enjoys sporting clays, skiing, and working out with F3. He provides pro bono assistance through the Houston Bar Association LegalLines and the Houston Volunteer Lawyers VA Hospital Legal Clinic. Douglas is active with his church and his children’s schools, and with fundraising serves on the board for the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center GI Clinic SCOPE Race (“Sprint for Colorectal Oncology Prevention and Education”).

Select Engagements

- Maritime counsel for construction and acquisition of vessels for the U.S. Navy Medium Unmanned Surface Vehicle (“MUSV”) program.
- Maritime counsel for acquisition of offshore cable-laying company with an international fleet of 34 cable-laying vessels and other support vessels.
- Lead counsel in shipbuilding agreement, financing, time charter and purchase option for polar expedition cruise vessel in excess of €106 million.
- Lead counsel in acquisition of shipyards and drydocks in Mobile, Alabama, and Pascagoula, Mississippi.
- Lead counsel for 10 vessel newbuild project valued in excess of \$100 million.
- Lead counsel in negotiation for new build construction agreement for articulated tug barge unit valued in excess of \$50 million.
- Co-counsel in two-week trial and appeals of complex maritime collision case with damages in excess of \$50 million.
- Lead counsel defending a stevedore in a fatality lawsuit in Brownsville, Texas, involving a truck driver crushed by falling steel cargo.
- Lead maritime counsel for the financing, acquisition, reflagging, refurbishment, charter, and heavy lift transportation of a \$68.5 million offshore drilling rig.
- Co-counsel in a five-day trial representing the owner of an offshore construction support vessel in a dispute with a charterer over the formation of a charterparty.
- Lead counsel in an SMA arbitration in New York representing a charterer in a dispute with a vessel owner over a seaworthiness warranty, prevailing on all claims and obtaining a full award for attorney’s fees.
- Lead counsel representing a vessel owner in Shipowner’s Limitation of Liability Act proceedings concerning a shipboard fire with three fatalities.
- Lead counsel representing a Jones Act employer in an emergency search and rescue and subsequent federal court lawsuits concerning an offshore

- platform support vessel crew member suicide.
- Lead counsel representing a major regional stevedore in numerous personal injury and cargo lawsuits and claims, and including nearly all aspects of stevedore liability exposure.
 - Lead counsel in multiple arbitrations in Houston and New York under HMAA, SMA, and AAA rules.
 - Extensive experience with shipboard investigations of personal injuries, vessel collisions and allisions, and environmental incidents.
 - Lead counsel prosecuting or defending 100+ maritime seizure proceedings in federal courts throughout Texas Gulf Coast.
 - Drafted and negotiated 1,000+ voyage, time, and bareboat charterparties.
 - Represented the purchaser or seller in 100+ major commercial vessel transactions, including documentation under U.S. and foreign-flags.

Admissions

- Texas

Memberships

- Houston Bar Association
- Houston Mariners Club
- Maritime Law Association of the United States
- Southeastern Admiralty Law Institute
- State Bar of Texas

Education

- Bradley University, BA, magna cum laude
- Tulane University, JD, cum laude

Recognitions

- 2020–2022, Admiralty and Maritime Law in Houston, listed in *Best Lawyers in America*©
- 2016–2021, Transportation: Shipping/Maritime: Litigation Law, listed in *Chambers USA*
- 2018–2021, listed in *The Legal 500 United States*
- 2016, “Top Rated Lawyer” in Texas, listed in *Texas Lawyer Magazine*

Professional Activities

Douglas is a proctor in admiralty with the Maritime Law Association of the United States, and he is actively involved with the Southeastern Admiralty Law Institute, having served in numerous roles and is now the former chairman. Douglas is also active with his church and his children’s schools, and with fundraising for the M.D.

Anderson Cancer Center. He is a certified arbitrator and former Chairman of the Houston Maritime Arbitrators Association (“HMAA”). Douglas also serves on the board of directors for the Houston Maritime and Energy Insurance Conference.