

Buyouts

By: Kirk Falconer
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Off-duty: Arsenal's Joelle Marquis on football, chocolate-covered popcorn and her dream job as POTUS chief of staff

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Buyouts' Off-duty provides a snapshot of top investors, including a few details about what they do when not chasing deals.

Joelle Marquis, this year named president of Arsenal Capital Partners, says she "stumbled" into a private equity career.

A former COO of Baltimore Technologies, Marquis undertook a three-month consulting project with Arsenal to support HR development in its portfolio companies. Deeply impressed by her expertise, co-founders Terry Mullen and Jeff Kovach hired her full-time in 2003.

As it turned out, the asset class appealed to Marquis: "I like the fast pace, the intensity, the ability to have an impact on so many lives," she told *Buyouts*.

Marquis has since played a leading role in all aspects of Arsenal's organization, building a culture of diverse talent acquisition and development, plus mentoring and coaching – capabilities she believes are essential to long-term performance.

"Human capital is as important as financial capital," Marquis said. As the private equity industry evolves, she said, it is recognizing that human capital, like financial capital, can be "leveraged, multiplied and grown" to deliver returns.

A mother of three, Marquis has a rich life outside of work, part of it spent working with non-profits, including Impact Clay and One Another Foundation.



Joelle Marquis, Arsenal Capital Partners

Q Where is your hometown?
Fleming Island, Florida, which is a peninsula that cuts into the west side of the St Johns River.

Q If you weren't in PE, what job would you like to have?
It's a tossup between the commissioner of the National Football League, chief of staff to a POTUS (president of the United States) my principles align with or a generous giving coach.

I really enjoy football and would like to modify the policies and practices to

ensure it's a sport that will be sustained for decades to come.

Chief of staff to a POTUS is a tougher one because the job itself is highly intriguing and one I'd enjoy but it's an environment where principles get squeezed and tested. Ensuring alignment with my principles and values would be a must.

I believe in helping others live their best lives and for many it's discovering the joy of giving and investing in others. If I could coach more people on how to do that in ways that bring them fulfillment, I know I'd find great pleasure in it. All that said, I

Buyouts

absolutely love what I do today in private equity!

Q How do you relax when you're not working?

I really enjoy pouring into not-for-profits and helping them develop their organizations to meet their overall objectives.

Q What book are you reading right now?

I am an avid reader and usually have more than one read going at a time.

Right now, I am reading *Atomic Habits* by James Clear, the Bible and *Halftime* by Bob Buford. *Halftime* encourages people to take a pause and reflect on the first half of their lives to discover who they are and what they want in the second half of life – redirecting us to focus less on the typical definitions of success and more on how to move toward significance.

Q What is your favorite song, album, performer or music genre?

I have two favorite songs from very different genres.

I really enjoy folk rock and one of my favorite songs is Harry Chapin's "Cat's in the Hat," which highlights the preoccupations plaguing parenthood. I love it because it is a great reminder of the importance of prioritizing family.

My other favorite song is Mathew West's "Do Something." It's an

inspirational story about a college student who moved abused, neglected children into a safe haven and calls us all to 'do something' to make a difference in the world.

Q What is your favorite meal, recipe, cocktail or bottle of wine?

I enjoy almost any seafood with capers and garlic, tequila chilled and neat, and Peterbrooke milk chocolate-covered popcorn. But none of those together!

Q What is your favorite place for a vacation, sanctuary or to explore?

Anywhere with water, preferably where waves are crashing and kinetic energy is transferring. I find it exhilarating and centering.

Q Who in your career do you regard as a mentor?

In my early career, I worked for a CFO with incredibly high standards. He helped establish many of my foundational approaches to business. Thirty years later he still holds a prominent place on my mental board of advisers – a group of people with qualities I respect and admire and who I use to give myself advice on various topics and issues.

Q Professionally, what was your toughest moment?

This one is unconventional to share

because it's sensitive, but if I am answering the question honestly, it was being sexually assaulted as I traveled between portfolio company meetings by a random stranger. It's not something I talk about often but it's one of the unfortunate risks of traveling alone and being female.

Q What was your most rewarding moment?

Whenever I receive feedback that I have helped someone unlock doors or helped them remove shackles from their past – a fear, a shame, the façade of success – that I've helped them move from false self to real self.

Q What PE buzz words or jargon do you hate most?

"Lipstick on a pig." It just conjures up an icky visual.

Q What advice would you give a young person interested in a PE career?

Dig beneath the surface and hold steadfast to finding a place where the culture is a great fit for you. For me, that means having genuine partnership, humility and doing the right thing.

Q What word or phrase best describes you?

Illuminator – showing people something they haven't seen before.