



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AK+G teams with Ben-Cohen Lawyers on behalf of two women all-star players against all-female football league.

Alexander, Krakow + Glick LLP (AK+G) of Santa Monica, known for its advocacy on behalf of workers who have suffered discrimination or mistreatment in the work-place, has just taken on another issue: the exploitation of women football players in all-female professional football.

On Friday, June 27, together with Ben-Cohen Lawyers of Beverly Hills, the firms have launched two class action lawsuits against the professional all-female Legends Football League (LFL) and its owner Mitchell Mortaza. The league is the only all-female football league in the United States. The instigators of the lawsuits are two former LFL stars: Melissa Margulies, an all-star running back for the Los Angeles Temptation, and Robin "Nikki" Johnson, an all-star Quarterback for the Las Vegas Sin.

The 12-team LFL played 4 regular-season and 3 playoff games last year. In addition to attendance at games, its revenue sources include concessions and television deals.

The lawsuits allege that the LFL wrongly classifies all players as being independent contractors rather than employees. The independent contractor designation is reserved for workers who exercise discretion and control over their working conditions. It is difficult to imagine any circumstance in which a player in a team sport such as football could ever qualify as an independent contractor, and LFL players have rules that govern their off-field activities as well. In addition to mandatory practices and games, players are required to attend promotional events as well as sell tickets to the games. Failure to attend practices, games, or promotional events will lead to discipline and possible termination from the league.

As the result of this misclassification, women football players are not paid the minimum wage and overtime that federal and state law require. The LFL pays players an arbitrary amount of its choosing, which, if the players are lucky, may amount to \$2,000 to \$3,500 for the entire season. For the 2013 season, Margulies and Johnson received nothing (\$0.00!) despite the fact that both played a full season for the LFL. Many other players were paid nothing for the 2013 season.

Margulies and Johnson are represented by Michael Morrison of Alexander, Krakow + Glick LLP in Santa Monica and Pejman Ben-Cohen and Joshua M. Arnold of Ben-Cohen Lawyers in Beverly Hills.

"These women are phenomenal athletes who are being asked to play a dangerous sport," Morrison said. "The fact that they are paid next to nothing given the inherent risks associated with football is more than just unlawful. It's exploitive. This is another example of women in sports being taken advantage of."

"The LFL has for years talked about how much it loves its players, yet in the midst of discussing new TV deals has demanded that players now play without compensation," added Arnold.

The low pay players receive is particularly outrageous given the nature of professional football. As with male football leagues, the players are subjected to violent hits and often experience catastrophic injuries. For example, Margulies suffered a broken orbital bone on her face and tore her ACL while playing. Johnson required hospitalization from a neck injury suffered during a game. The LFL often fails to cover the cost of medical treatment for players who suffer injuries in practices or games. Margulies incurred substantial medical bills related to her injuries. She has not been reimbursed.

The first lawsuit is on behalf of California players of the league and asserts violations of California labor laws. The second lawsuit is a national class action that asserts violations of federal law — the Fair Labor Standards Act — on behalf of all players of the league.

The LFL began as the Lingerie Football League whose Lingerie Bowl was an annual Super Bowl half-time alternative on pay-per-view TV in 2004-06. After a break of several years, it evolved into the present 12-team league with a championship game played as a pay-tv alternative to the pre-kickoff program before the Super Bowl. The LFL has also recently started leagues in Canada and Australia.

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Alexander Krakow + Glick LLP
401 Wilshire Boulevard
Suite 1000
Santa Monica
California 90401

T: 310.394.0888
F: 310.394.0811

info@akgllp.com