

Rob Ray Sues NHLPA a Second Time

Written by Peter Morrison
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Last week, it was reported that former NHL enforcer Rob Ray, a 15 year veteran who played for the Buffalo Sabres and Ottawa Senators, filed a suit against the NHLPA , saying the union purposely deceived him in an earlier case which was settled in September 2005. Â The suit, filed in January in the State Supreme Court in Buffalo, is seeking punitive damages of \$2 million.

Rayâ€™s first suit against the NHLPA, filed in December 2004, claimed that the union had refused to pay him a stipend during the 2004-05 lockout, which saw the union pay between \$5,000- 10,000 a month to Player Association members.Â

Ray played his final NHL games during the 2003-2004 season and was an unrestricted free-agent at the time of the lockout, but had not retired and [he claims he was seeking tryouts with various teams prior to the 2005-06 season](#)

Ray has suggested that the NHLPA was acting in retaliation for comments he made saying he would be willing to cross the picket line if the NHL decided to use replacement players in games.

Ray and the NHLPA reached an agreement for an undisclosed amount of money in September 2005.Â Part of the agreement forbids Ray from seeking more money in the future. Â Ray claims the Playerâ€™s Association told him they would not distribute any more money to players after the lockout ended.

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However, the NHLPA did in fact give the surplus of its compensation fund to current and retired players, and [Ray says the NHLPA](#) "falsely, fraudulently, and with the intent to deceive and defraud," got him to settle the first suit.Â

On the other hand, The NHLPA have asked for the case to be dismissed and counter the claim with the 2005 agreement which states, "it is understood that in this agreement, Ray is waiving any claim to future payments that may be made by the NHLPA to former members."

Â For the union the case causes another headache for an organization which is eager to put all the controversy and conflicts of the past few years behind them.Â

The bitter struggle between the union and the NHL owners during the lockout, led to the ousting of long time NHLPA chief executive Bob Goodenow.Â His successor, Bob Saskin, held the position for less than two years, in a reign full of trouble. Â Saskin immediately made enemies with several players during the hiring process where [he tried to bypass a mandatory secret vote with representatives of all 30 teams](#).
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Saskin's relationship with the players continued to deteriorate with what was seen as a [cozy relationship between him and NHL leaders Gary Bettman and Bill Daly](#).
Â Saskin's time in charge of the union ended following a scandal where he was found to have read player's emails without their knowledge.

Paul Kelly, a lawyer from Boston's firm of Kelly, Libby and Hoopes was appointed chief executive in October 2007 and inherited an organization which badly needs stability and does not need any more conflict with its members.

Ray, now a reporter during Buffalo Sabres games, has not commented on the case and a court date has not yet been set.

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