

As Major League Baseball begins its new season, a new lawsuit comes from an executive who alleges he was cheated out of one of the professional league's biggest success stories this century. That would be BAMTech, the streaming technology provider spun off from MLB Advanced Media and largely sold to Disney last year for \$2.6 billion.

Dinn Mann, former executive vp content at MLB Advanced Media, is the plaintiff, who says he spent over 17 years of his life transforming the company "from a fledgling startup into a multibillion-dollar media juggernaut."

Mann credits his role as centralizing digital rights and identifying strategic opportunities to grow the business. Mann also says he helped forge key relationships with Major League Soccer, U.S. Figure Skating and others that brought BAM beyond baseball.

"Mr. Mann was also responsible for collaborating with Will Ferrell's Funny or Die and HBO, among many others," adds the complaint filed in New York Supreme Court.

According to the complaint, IMG heavily recruited Mann from late 2005 through mid-2006. Mann says an employment offer included equity in IMG and that he was prepared to accept. But then, BAM's CEO, Bob Bowman, allegedly intervened by persuading him to stay and promising to "go to bat" for him with the BAM board.

"Specifically, Bowman insisted that Mr. Mann and [colleague Noah] Garden give him an opportunity to counter the IMG offer," states the complaint. "A critical point, of course, was the equity that had been offered by IMG. Bowman and Mr. Mann specifically discussed that Mr. Mann would only stay with BAM if he was given equity in the non-baseball business, and Bowman told Mr. Mann that if MLB could equal IMG's offer, Mr. Mann should say, 'screw you' to [Ted] Forstmann and IMG."

Mann alleges that a BAM board meeting on June 29, 2006, he was awarded a 2 percent equity in the non-baseball business, which he asserts means BAMTech, as well as increased compensation. The offer was enough. Bowman allegedly emailed, "[Y]ou are about to become f u rich."

Now comes the lawsuit over what Mann says he didn't get.

"Despite the fact that Mr. Mann is a 2% owner of BAMTech, he received no compensation when Disney recently paid approximately \$2.6 billion over two transactions to purchase 75 percent of BAMTech," continues the complaint. "To make matters worse, Mr. Mann was fired without cause at the end of 2017, and was asked to sign a separation agreement that could result in the waiver of his rights and compensation as an equity owner in BAMTech."

The complaint doesn't say explicitly the agreement wasn't signed.

Mann says his ownership interest is currently worth \$80 million, but he's only been offered \$2 million to walk away. Represented by attorney Douglas Wigdor, he adds he has been advised he is not actually a 2 percent owner. He is suing MLBAM and BAMTech for breach of contract, breach of the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing, promissory estoppel, unjust enrichment, and fraud. He's demanding compensatory and punitive damages.

The reason for his termination isn't clear from the lawsuit. Bowman was himself pushed out of the company in December over misconduct claims.

We'll add comment from BAMTech if the defendant has anything to say.