

Major League Baseball online content arm BAMTech sued by ousted exec over equity claim in Disney stake

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BY James Fanelli

A former top executive at Major League Baseball's online content company is crying foul, saying in a lawsuit he was cheated out of nearly \$80 million when Disney purchased a majority control of the firm last year.

Dinn Mann said in a lawsuit Thursday that he was executive vice president of content at Baseball Advanced Media for 17 years until he was fired in 2017.

In 2006, sports marketing firm IMG tried to woo Mann away from BAM. In order to get him to stay, BAM's board agreed to give Mann a 2% equity interest in the company, according to the lawsuit filed in Manhattan Supreme Court.

That stake became a potential windfall in 2016, when Disney purchased a 33% stake in BAM's non-baseball business, BAMTech, for \$1 billion. A year later, it bought another 42% in BAMTech for \$1.58 billion. BAMTech is now worth \$3.75 billion.

The lawsuit, which names BAM as a defendant, says Mann received nothing from Disney's acquisition. Instead he was offered \$2 million to walk away from any claims he had when he was fired without cause.

"When it came time for MLBAM to make good on its agreement to pay Mr. Mann 2% of the equity it had previously granted, it decided instead to cast him aside and renege on its promise," Mann's lawyers, Douglas Wigdor and Michael Willemin, said in a statement.

"Companies should not be permitted to treat dedicated employees in this manner, and we look forward to holding the defendants accountable."

Major League Baseball said the lawsuit lacks merit.

Disney did not immediately respond to a request for comment.