

Ex-Steeler Merriweather Sues Western Pa. Casino

Written by Administrator
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Former Pittsburgh Steelers linebacker Mike Merriweather has filed a federal lawsuit claiming he was fired from his promotions job with a western Pennsylvania casino because of perceptions about his race.

Merriweather, now 53, was a Pro Bowl linebacker for the Steelers during the 1980s, and contends the casino's white management made disparaging remarks, sometimes in jest, about him being potentially violent because he's black.

Merriweather's lawsuit contends he was hired in April 2011 by Sean Sullivan, The Meadows' vice president and general manager. Merriweather's job as director of sports marketing was to promote events that might attract other athletes to the casino about 15 miles south of Pittsburgh.

Merriweather's salary was to be \$5,000 plus 10 percent of the money the casino generated from athletes who gambled after Merriweather invited them.

Sullivan told Merriweather he could earn more than \$100,000 per year because he had a "cordial demeanor," according to the suit. Merriweather's lawsuit contends he was fired in January 2012 and is still owed the commissions he earned, which the lawsuit didn't detail.

According to the lawsuit, Merriweather's problems stemmed largely from disagreements he had with Steven Hartmann, The Meadows' director of casino marketing. Sullivan and Hartmann, who allegedly asked Sullivan to fire Merriweather, are both white.

Hartmann and other white management staff allegedly made disparaging remarks about Merriweather's race and whether he might be violent or assault people, the lawsuit states. Eventually, Merriweather contends he was the only employee kept out of the loop of departmental emails and meetings before his firing.

Tom Meinert, a spokesman for The Meadows Racetrack & Casino, which is being sued along

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with parent company Cannery Casino Resorts, declined to comment on the suit which was filed Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Pittsburgh.

Merriweather contends he is an ordained minister, and is certified as an anger management and substance abuse counselor, but was nonetheless treated like he might be violent. He's now the athletic director at a Christian high school near his home in Stockton, Calif.

According to the lawsuit, Merriweather was hired by Sullivan because he was a former teammate. Merriweather's attorney, John Stember, said the two played football at the University of the Pacific before Merriweather was drafted by the Steelers.

Merriweather played for the Steelers from 1982 until he was traded to the Minnesota Vikings in 1989. Merriweather also signed with the Green Bay Packers and New York Jets before retiring in 1993.

Merriweather's lawsuit seeks unspecified damages, including lost pay.

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