
US Women's Football Team Equal Pay Case Dismissed in Court

By: Telesur

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A federal judge dismissed the United States women's football team's bid for equal pay Friday, rejecting claims the players had been underpaid, marking a crushing defeat in light of the constant struggle for equal rights for women in sports.

In a 32-page ruling, Judge Gary Klausner of the U.S. District Court for Central California in Los Angeles tossed the women's claim of pay discrimination, ruling in favor of the United States Soccer Federation (USSF).

The judge ruled that the U.S. Women's National Team (WNT), reigning world champions, does not have enough evidence to bring to trial its claims that its players are receiving unequal pay, dealing with a significant setback to the team's lawsuit against the USSF.

On the other hand, Klausner did allow the women's case for unfair treatment in areas such as travel, housing and medical support to proceed to trial, set for June 16 in Los Angeles.

However, the equal pay claims, the central plank of the case, were dismissed because there was also evidence that the players had previously turned down an offer in the Collective Bargaining Agreement negotiations to be paid along the lines of the U.S. men's team.

"The history of negotiations between the parties demonstrates that the WNT rejected an offer to be paid under the same pay-to-play structure as the MNT, and the WNT was willing to forgo higher bonuses for benefits, such as greater base compensation and the guarantee of a higher number of contracted players," Klausner wrote.

"Accordingly, plaintiffs cannot now retroactively deem their CBA (collective bargaining agreement) worse than the MNT CBA by reference to what they would have made had they been paid under the MNT's pay-to-play terms structure when they rejected such a structure," he added.

For their part, the U.S. female players were left stunned by their defeat. The women had been seeking back pay of US\$66 million under the Equal Pay Act.

Among other things, the team told the court that the players received smaller bonuses for friendlies and that they would have obtained more in their contracts if they had the same terms as the male players' contracts.

??????? "If you know this team at all you know we have a lot of fight left in us. We knew this wasn't going to be easy, change never is," Becky Sauerbrunn, a defender on the national team, added.

The football federation has come under intense scrutiny in recent weeks after arguing that female players are less skilled than the male players.

The filing triggered outrage amongst the women's players while influential sponsors such as Coca-Cola voiced disgust at the remarks.

USSF President Carlos Cordeiro later resigned following the uproar and the prominent U.S. women's team star Megan Rapinoe accused the USSF of "blatant sexism" in its legal filings.

The U.S. women, who clinched back-to-back World Cup wins with victory at last year's finals in France, had based their claim for back pay in the disparities between prize money distributed by FIFA at the men's and women's World

Cups.

Germany's men won US\$35 million for their victory in the 2014 World Cup while France earned US\$38 million after triumphing in Russia in 2018.

The U.S. women, victors in the 2015 and 2019 World Cups, earned total prize money of US\$6 million over the two tournaments.

For its part, the USSF argued in court that between the years 2015-2019, the women were paid more money than the men on both a cumulative and an average per game basis.

The pay gap has been under discussion in recent years as women's sport, in general, becomes more visible in the world, while gender discrimination and sexism continue to exist in most sports. The more popular the sport and the more money it moves, the more inequalities there are between women and men, say the analysts, mostly women. So, the struggle is still very long and tumultuous for feminist athletes.

"We will never stop fighting for EQUALITY," Rapinoe wrote on Twitter.
