

Federal court says PBA can undo Budweiser's bow tie

AKRON, Ohio — A multi-million dollar antitrust lawsuit filed against the PBA was dismissed in its entirety last month by a federal court in St. Louis.

The suit was filed in 1988 by Eureka Urethane, Inc., of St. Louis after the PBA did not clear for use in PBA tournaments a bowling ball the firm produced which carried Budweiser's product name and "bow tie" logo.

In his ruling, Judge Stephen N. Limbaugh of the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Missouri, said the PBA's actions in refusing to sanction the advertising-bearing ball were "neither unreasonable nor anti-competitive" and were "a sound exercise of business judgment calculated to preserve their ability to serve the interests of professional bowlers."

The opinion also recognized the PBA's discretion over whether to permit commercial advertising on the equipment that athletes use during its sports events. The court further confirmed the PBA's right to arbitrarily permit commercial logos on some articles but not others with violating antitrust laws.

PBA commissioner Joe Antentora termed the impact of the decision far-reaching, not only for the PBA, but also for other sports organizations and television broadcasters.

Added Antentora: "We stated at the outset that Eureka's complaint was totally without merit but, if successful, it would infringe and destroy the PBA's right to conduct our business for the best interests of our members. This decision clearly and emphatically reaffirms the PBA's right to make intelligent business decisions and to regulate the commercialization of our tournaments."