Opportunist Mel Molnick steals Bodog.com Domain Name

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Turns out that Bodog Entertainment had its Bodog.com domain name hijacked from none other than opportunist Mel Molnick and the Home Gambling Network, Inc. (HGN) of Nevada. HGN is a wholly owned subsidiary of i2corp and owns a method patent that relates to live electronic betting from a remote location.

On Aug 1, 2007 a judge for the Superior Court of Kings County in Seattle, Washington handed down a foreign judgment in the amount of $48,937,456.00 in the case of 1ST TECHNOLOGY LLC VS BODOG ENT GROUP S.A.

Molnick's issued patents in:
European Patent No: 0 956 118
United States of America Patent # 5,800,268
Australian Patent #'s 755152 & 757705

Molnick's patent which governs "a method by which a person may participate in a live casino game and place bets from a location remote from the casino at which the game is being played" was filed with the U.S. Patent Office in 1995 and published in 1998 is also recognized in Europe and Asia.

The patent further describes a table with a live dealer whose image is broadcast to players at their remote locations. Point-Spreads.com has spoken to legal experts that believe Molnick is trying to broadly interpret a fairly narrow patent that specifically applies to internet casinos that use real dealers, something that Bodog does not do.

A method patent is a controversial type of patent that covers a process rather than a particular product. Method patents are often litigated.

"We are fighting this dispute and are confident that we will win,” stated Bodog Entertainment Founder Calvin Ayre. “I sincerely apologize to any customers affected by our interruption and will continue to provide updates as they become available.”

Ayre's trademarked Bodog.com brand joins a long list of other internet gambling related domain names that have been targets to Molnick including Ladbrokes.com, Sportingbet.com, Betsson.com, BetInternet.com and CasinoWebCam.com.

The biggest difference with Bodog is that the name is a registered trademarked owned by Calvin Ayre for years. So a precedent setting legal battle over the rights to the Bodog.com domain name could be looming on the horizon. However, it might prove to be more cost effective for Ayre to reach a settlement with football starting this upcoming weekend, clearly something that Melnick's legal advisers were planning on when they went after the most recognized brand in the internet gambling industry on Monday.

Abuse of the patent process in the United States creates a huge drain on the technology sector every year only to enrich unscrupulous lawyers and their associates. Mel Molnick has been successful in using the American legal system to coerce other operators to pay a form of ransom to get their name back.

Other internet gambling operators are far from immune from this sort of sabotage and should look to protect their domain names by moving them to a domain name registrar located in a country that does not recognize Melnick's patent.