

## Bucs accused of extortion

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### Document Text

Four season ticket holders say they were threatened at a meeting to mediate a dispute with the team over seating assignments.

They sat across a conference table from each other in a downtown high-rise, representatives of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on one side, the fans suing the team on the other.

The meeting last Saturday was supposed to be an attempt to settle the case of four season ticket holders who say they were treated unfairly because they got less desirable seats when the Bucs moved to a new stadium.

Instead, the meeting exploded almost as soon as it began, leaving a trail of allegations, recriminations and criminal complaints.

The latest: On Friday the lawyer for the fans announced in court that he had asked police to investigate "threats and/or extortion" by the Bucs' lawyer at Saturday's meeting. He said the fans were threatened with losing their seats if they did not agree to a settlement that day.

According to attorney Jonathan Alpert and sworn affidavits from the four fans, Bucs attorney Arnold Levine told them at the beginning of the meeting, "This is not meant as a threat, but if you do not settle this case today, you will not have seats in the stadium in 2001. You will have no seats, and you can watch the games in your living room. The Glazers do not care if you sue them." Malcolm Glazer owns the team; his sons run it.

The four fans already have paid for seats for the 2000 season, and have paid deposits on those seats for 2001 as part of a 10-year agreement.

"I am a longtime Bucs fan, and the seats for 2001 and later football seasons have both financial and emotional value to me," said an affidavit signed by Otha "Gene" Wilson.

Levine, who has accused Alpert of tossing a full cup of coffee in his face that day, said confidentiality rules prevent him from discussing what was said. He did say it is common in such mediation hearings to tell the other side "what's going to happen to you if I win." Levine also said the law is clear that a ticket to an event such as a football game is "a revokable license."

Circuit Judge Sam Pendino denied Levine's motion to dismiss the case.

According to testimony Friday, the Bucs had been prepared to offer a settlement, though no details were discussed in court. Pendino ordered both sides to attend another mediation hearing.

Tampa police detectives are reviewing the extortion complaint, which names Levine, Bucs general manager Rich McKay and Edward and Bryan Glazer.

The Hillsborough State Attorney's Office is deciding whether Alpert should be charged with battery, a misdemeanor, in the coffee incident. Levine also filed a civil suit seeking damages.

Friday, Alpert used the word "spilled" and said the incident occurred as he and his clients abruptly left the room after Levine's threat.

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### **Abstract** (Document Summary)

Caption: Bucs attorney Arnold Levine shows the judge a shirt he says was stained when Jonathan Alpert, the attorney for four fans, tossed a full cup of coffee at him during a mediation hearing., (ran CITY & STATE, SS of METRO & STATE); Jonathan Alpert; says the coffee was spilled as he and his clients abruptly left the room after Arnold Levine's threat., (ran CITY & STATE, SS of METRO & STATE); Photo: BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO, TONY LOPEZ; BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO

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