

SCORE ONE FOR THE DEFENSE

# Former running back from S.C. wins courtroom victory in contract dispute

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A professional football player with a Super Bowl ring and a multi-million dollar salary may not seem like he could become a ready victim.

But that's exactly what happened to former University of South Carolina and NFL running back Duce Staley, Columbia attorney Donald Gist told a jury last month in Montgomery County (Md.) Circuit Court.

The jury agreed, awarding Staley \$362,500 in a breach-of-contract and negligent misrepresentation counterclaim against the Maryland-based sports and entertainment marketing agency he had hired to find sponsors for his fledgling drag-racing team.

Staley contended the agency failed to perform under a one-year contract in which he was to pay \$150,000 in 12 equal \$12,500 payments.

He stopped making payments after five months, claiming the agency had not made any reasonable effort to secure the sponsors. The agency sued for breach of contract.

The jury exonerated Staley and found the company liable in a May 19 verdict.

"The moral of the story is that there are people waiting in the wings out there to take advantage of professional athletes," Gist told *Lawyers Weekly*.

"These athletes can make millions of dollars, but they are young and not experienced in the business world, and they can fall prey to these predatory types who seek to capitalize on their hard-earned money."

Gist represented Staley along with Leitra Maxwell of Columbia and Christopher Rudolph of Greenbelt, Md.

The case is *Treseler Zalbe, LLC v. Staley*, Maryland

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AP Photo/Keith Sokolovic

Former Pittsburgh Steelers running back Duce Staley won a counterclaim in a contract dispute over his plans to found a drag-racing team. Staley played football for USC and now hosts a sports talk radio show in Columbia.