



Los Angeles Galaxy defender Alexi Lalas (No. 30) and his MLS colleagues must ponder their relationship with the NFLPA after its unsuccessful litigation.

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Lawsuit Appeal

PLAYERS PONDER THEIR NEXT MOVE

For MLS players, the latest setback in court burdens them with far more questions than answers.

The 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston affirmed a summary judgment and jury verdict in favor of MLS and U.S. Soccer, marking the players third straight legal defeat.

Years of litigation have cost both sides millions. The resulting animosity may have forever poisoned the relationship between MLS and the players' representative, the NFL Players' Association.

"The NFLPA still represents us, and they've been curiously silent," said Galaxy defender Alexi Lalas. "The players have to make a decision as to which is the best way to

go from here, whether to continue litigation or find some sort of workable relationship."

NFLPA executive director John Kerr says he'll discuss the situation with the player representatives of all 10 teams to decide on a course of action.

"It's a tough fight for the players," said Kerr, formerly head of NASL and MISL unions. "Even if somehow or other the NFLPA disappeared from the scene, the players would still have to fight."

The NFLPA had appealed on two counts: That federal Judge George O'Toole erred in summarily dismissing a contention the league wasn't a viable single-entity (April 2000), and a jury verdict (December 2000) that MLS was not an illegal monopoly and U.S. Soccer did not conspire to inhibit competition by designating MLS as the sole U.S. Division I league.

A three-judge panel deliberated more than five months before affirming both decisions.

The NFLPA, which has represented MLS players since 1996, filed the original lawsuit in February, 1997.

In the aftermath of the appeals decision, players could decide to form a union, either with the NFLPA or another representative, instead of being represented by a players' association. Forming a union would give them the right to strike.

In any case, the formation of a collective bargaining agreement could foster better relations between the players and its league. MLS executives firmly refused to bargain while the lawsuit and the appeal were pending.

Quakes defender Jeff Agoos, a supporter of NFLPA in the past, isn't sure it can attain what the players want: limited free agency, retirement benefits and salary increases.

"I don't know whether they're the right group to go with now or not," he said. "At this point, I'm not sure what group is the right group to go with or which direction is the right way to go."

— Ridge Mahoney

Soccer America's Top 25 Women's Recruits

	PLAYER	POS.	HOMETOWN	COLLEGE
1	Jill Oakes	M	West Hills, Calif.	UCLA
2	Lori Chalupny	M	Chesterfield, Mo.	North Carolina
3	Amy Steadman	D	Brevard, N.C.	North Carolina
4	Lindsay Tarpley	F	Kalamazoo, Mich.	North Carolina
5	Manya Makoski	M	Trumbull, Conn.	Arizona State
6	Kendall Fletcher	D	Cary, N.C.	North Carolina
7	Allison Graham	M	Fayetteville, Ga.	Clemson
8	Iris Mora	F	Cancun, Mexico	UCLA
9	Sarah Huffman	D	Flower Mound, Texas	Virginia
10	Kacey White	M	Arlington, Texas	North Carolina
11	Annie Scheffer	M	Yakima, Wash.	Notre Dame
12	Kristin Weiss	F	Brecksville, Ohio	Virginia
13	Hayley Hunt	D	San Marino, Calif.	Stanford
14	Carmelina Moscato	F	Mississauga, Ontario	Penn State
15	Stacy Lindstrom	M	Laguna Niguel, Calif.	UCLA
16	Kelly Hammond	D	Bowie, Md.	Virginia
17	Brittany Cooper	M	Albuquerque, N.M.	Arizona State
18	Johanna Rasmussen	F	Nykebing, Denmark	Texas Tech
19	Noelle Keselica	M	Gaithersburg, Md.	Virginia
20	Allie True	D	Alamo, Calif.	UCLA
21	Katie Rivera	F	Mission Viejo, Calif.	UCLA
22	Jenny Farenbaugh	D	Reseda, Calif.	Stanford
23	Janice McGann	M	Oakville, Ontario	UW Milwaukee
24	Kate Taylor	G	Menomonee Falls, Wis.	Boston College
25	Stephanie Ebner	F	Taylorville, Utah	Arizona State