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Women Hurt By Game Pucks Sue Wings, NHL

Two women who claim disabling injuries from pucks that flew into the stands at Joe Louis Arena have filed suit against the Detroit Red Wings, the arena's owners and the NHL.

The suits were filed in Wayne County Circuit Court, says the women's attorney, James Elliott.

Elizabeth Taylor, 52, from the Flint area, and Sandra Quick, 32, of suburban Detroit, would not have been hurt had the team installed nets in the end zones, where many pucks enter the stands during games, Elliott said.

The NHL began requiring nets behind the goals for this season in the aftermath of the death of 13-year-old Brittanie Cecil after she was hit by a puck last March in Columbus, Ohio.

Red Wings spokesman John Hahn, declined comment on the suits.

"We have yet to see any of the lawsuits. Our legal counsel will have to review it before we can comment," Hahn said.

Quick was injured at a playoff game between Detroit and the Colorado Avalanche on May 20, 2002. She lost three teeth and had damage to four others, Elliott said.

Taylor was hurt while watching a Central Collegiate Hockey Association game on March 16, 2001. She sustained permanent nerve damage and required plastic surgery, her lawyer said.

Elliott said four to five pucks fly into the stands at a typical game without nets. With a speed that can reach 100 mph, the pucks hit and hurt spectators before they can react, he said.

The need for nets in the end zones has been clear to the NHL for a long time, Elliott said.

"They knew. They've known for years," he said.

The protective netting long has been mandatory in European rinks but never caught on in most of North America because teams were reluctant to interfere with the fans' view of the game. Leagues in Quebec do require end-zone nets.

"Had the netting been placed" at Joe Louis, Elliott said, "these women would not have been injured, and Brittanie Cecil would not have died."

Besides the Red Wings and the league, a third defendant is Olympia Entertainment, which runs Joe Louis Arena. Mike Ilitch owns the team and Olympia.

Attorney for the plaintiff: James O. Elliott