

## **Legal Team Is Reviewing Doping Decision, Says Essendon Captain**

Essendon Captain Jobe Watson has remarked it has been difficult for the team to come to terms with the decision that found him and 33 other [Australian Football League](#) players guilty of doping offences. The suspensions mean 12 current Essendon players and the five at other clubs are suspended for the 2016 season.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) upheld an [appeal](#) by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) against the AFL Anti-Doping Tribunal ruling of March 2015 that had initially cleared the players. The CAS panel found 34 past and present Essendon players guilty of violating [anti-doping rules](#) and suspended them for the 2016 season. The decision is expected to further damage credibility and sustainability of Essendon and may mean a likely end to some careers.

In a statement on website of the Essendon Football Club, Watson on behalf of the players said the decision announced by the Court of Arbitration for Sport to uphold WADA's appeal is devastating. The Essendon Captain remarked the team is struggling to come to terms with the decision and feels it does not support firm belief of the team that we are innocent. Watson also said our legal team is conducting a thorough review of the decision and will explore any avenues available to us and added that the players would like to thank our families, our friends, our members and supporters for their unwavering support.

Watson also remarked we will not be making any further comment and ask the media to please respect our privacy during this extremely challenging period. The professional Australian Rules footballer said we would also like to thank the AFL Players Association for their ongoing support throughout the last three years.

It is widely believed that the 34 players would take Essendon to court and this could possibly mean millions of dollars would be at stake. Commenting on the CAS verdict, AFL players' association chief executive Paul Marsh said the association would talk to the league and Essendon Football Club first. Marsh added there would be a "very high" chance of court action if the talks do not work out as expected.

Ben McDevitt, the chief executive of Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority, said there were very little grounds for the players to claim they were at no significant fault.

The AFL players' association chief said he does not believe anyone wants to drag this through the courts and add another few years to this process but added he would like to think that there could be productive discussions to try and get to this point. Marsh also remarked legal action is

something that one can look at if the talks fail and added legal team of the players will now conduct a thorough review of the decision.

Federal Greens leader Richard Di Natale, a medical doctor and a former VFL player, criticized the CAS verdict and said the onus of responsibility needs to be applied further up the line to those health professionals, health administrators and other individuals who have had a role to play in what's occurred here.

In another development, AFL CEO Gillon McLachlan commented that the Brownlow Medal awarded to Watson in 2012, the game's highest individual honor, would be reviewed in February in light of the doping verdict.