

The Lawyer Taking On StubHub Over World Cup Ticket Sales

Bradford Clements had already been battling the ticketing platform when the World Cup brought a flood of new clients.



Bradford Clements in Menlo Park, California, where he works from a shared workspace helping StubHub customers who allege the ticket platform wronged them. *Photographer: Jonah Reenders/Bloomberg*

By [Ella Feldman](#)

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Translate

- Bradford Clements, a 44-year-old lawyer, has been on a mission to hold StubHub accountable for alleged wrongdoings, and has taken on 30 people with World Cup-related claims and has a waitlist topping 250.
- StubHub is facing scrutiny from regulators and law enforcement, and has declined to comment on a Texas probe and other lawsuits, legal proceedings and customer complaints, instead pointing to its FanProtect Guarantee.
- Fans have reported issues with cancelled World Cup tickets, and some have had trouble getting answers from StubHub, while others said the company didn't offer replacement tickets because World Cup games are in high demand.

Bradford Clements' phone kept buzzing while watching Paraguay take on Turkey in the World Cup last month at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California.

But the notifications weren't about the game. The 44-year-old lawyer was being flooded with requests from people alleging that StubHub Holdings Inc. had wronged them.

Spurred by a friend who said StubHub canceled tickets just before a college football game, Clements has been on a mission the past eight months to hold the company accountable. The World Cup has generated an influx of potential clients, with fans spending thousands of dollars on record ticket prices. The attorney said he has already taken on 30 people with World Cup-related claims and has a waitlist topping 250.

"That is just the tip of the iceberg," said Clements, an independent attorney who worked as a prosecutor and corporate lawyer earlier in his career before pivoting to litigation investing. "There's a lot of complaining about the World Cup, a lot of people screwed over."

Clements' caseload adds to a growing list of hurdles for StubHub, which bills itself as the world's largest ticket marketplace. The company's shares have declined more than 50% since an initial public offering in September. Some results have missed Wall Street's expectations amid increasing competition, while its business practices are drawing scrutiny from regulators and law enforcement.

One recent inquiry came earlier this month when Texas opened an investigation into StubHub after receiving complaints from consumers who believed they had secured seats for World Cup matches, only to be told at short notice that their tickets were no longer available.

StubHub declined to comment on the Texas probe and other lawsuits, legal proceedings and customer complaints cited in this story. In response to a detailed list of questions, the company gave a general statement that its mission is to make buying tickets easier and safer, but “even a single bad experience is deeply disappointing for fans and for us.”

StubHub's Big Drop

Shares of the ticket platform have fallen more than 50% since its September IPO.



Source: Bloomberg

The company also pointed to its FanProtect Guarantee that provides replacement tickets or a full refund and said that it’s “working tirelessly to resolve ticket transfer issues and get every fan into their match.” StubHub said it’s continually improving.

Fans have also posted on social media about cancelled World Cup tickets while using competing ticket platforms like [SeatGeek](#) and [Vivid Seats](#). But most of the scrutiny, including proposed class action lawsuits, has been directed at StubHub.

Resale sites such as StubHub don't actually take possession of a ticket when it's put up for sale. Instead, the platform connects buyers and sellers much like eBay. The buyer pays for what is essentially a promise that the seller will deliver digital tickets before the event.

When tickets aren't delivered, often called dropped or broken sales, StubHub says that it offers replacement tickets to the event or a refund. But that process has been the source of growing frustration during the World Cup because it's one of the priciest sporting events in history. Fans put down thousands of dollars to attend sold-out games and many spent much more booking travel.



Fans traveling to the World Cup match between France and Senegal at MetLife Stadium. *Photographer: Michael Nagle/Bloomberg*

A handful of customers said in interviews that they've had trouble getting answers from StubHub about their tickets when they don't show up, while others said the company didn't offer replacement tickets because World Cup games

are so in demand. Similar stories have spread across social media and been picked up by local and national press.

StubHub said that as of May its overall refund rate was a little more than 1%. It didn't provide figures for during the World Cup, which started on June 11.

Sergio Alvarado, a 45-year-old physician based in Louisiana, said after weeks of back-and-forth with StubHub, a company representative told him while he drove to a match in Arlington, Texas, that his tickets wouldn't be delivered. He'd spent more than \$1,400 on two tickets to attend Argentina's game against Austria. StubHub has since refunded him for the tickets and applied a roughly \$1,400 credit to his StubHub account. That didn't cover the \$6,000 he spent on travel and accommodations for the weekend, including flying his parents to Dallas from Mexico for the game.

"It was heartbreaking," Alvarado said of missing the match.



Sellers have grievances with StubHub, too.

Camilo Gutierrez, a 56-year-old engineer and project manager who lives in Beaumont, Texas, bought more than a dozen World Cup tickets from FIFA with the intention of scalping most of them on StubHub. The company asked

Gutierrez for proof that he had indeed purchased the tickets, which he provided promptly, according to emails between Gutierrez and StubHub.

StubHub proceeded to cancel four of Gutierrez's sales, including two tickets to the World Cup Final for \$54,000, and penalize him more than \$23,000 for incomplete transactions. The cancellations happened in April, before FIFA had given Gutierrez the tickets he purchased.

"I made an investment with money that I knew I didn't need to live," Gutierrez, one of Clements' clients, said. "But it was still a hard blow. I'm not a millionaire, either."

Clements sent a letter to StubHub demanding the company reverse the penalties and lift a block on Gutierrez's account. StubHub settled the claims, but it still hasn't paid or removed penalties totaling more than \$19,000 as part of that agreement, Clements said.

Dropped sales happen for several reasons. Scammers might try to sell tickets they don't have. Scalpers list tickets on multiple marketplaces and sell at the highest price. Sometimes, an incomplete sale comes down to a complication in the ticket transfer process.

FIFA, the organizer of the World Cup, didn't start delivering tickets to people who had purchased them until May for a tournament that started in the second week of June, according to its [website](#). And for many fans, digital tickets didn't arrive until a few days before the match. The lag between purchasing tickets from FIFA and accessing them has created headaches, according to online complaints and interviews with resellers and buyers.

In a statement, FIFA said that it has no control over transactions made on third-party platforms and "rejects any suggestion" that issues on those channels with World Cup tickets are the result of FIFA's ticketing infrastructure. The organization added that its resale marketplace remains the only place to guarantee the proper transfer, delivery and validity of World Cup ticket transactions.

Another complicating factor is StubHub's creation of email addresses to facilitate some transactions. Three customers said they were told to transfer and accept tickets through an unfamiliar email address, with obscure domains like "tealroofingexperts.com" or "indigocapitaladvisors.com" that are registered to a StubHub subsidiary. Some customers were wary of using these email addresses to make FIFA accounts and missed FIFA's 72-hour window to accept the tickets they purchased.

StubHub didn't comment directly on the use of alternative email addresses, but said it's been taking steps for years to navigate barriers created by the technology of ticketing platforms, all with the goal of getting fans into the event.



The ticket resolution point for the World Cup at NRG Stadium in Houston. *Photographer: Jack Gorman/Getty Images*

Clements isn't the only lawyer working on behalf of frustrated StubHub customers.

Two proposed class action lawsuits recently filed in Manhattan against StubHub allege that the company's handling of the tournament has been rampant with consumer protection issues for the sports ticketing industry. StubHub hasn't responded to the complaints yet, and a judge will later decide whether to give them class status.

The complaints echo a lawsuit filed last year by a Taylor Swift fan against StubHub after it cancelled her ticket purchase to the Eras Tour and offered her replacement tickets in seats with a worse view. In April, a federal judge compelled arbitration, blocking the claims from going to trial.

Like many corporations, StubHub has a clause in its terms and conditions that requires consumers to resolve disputes privately through arbitration rather than in the courts. StubHub's arbitration clause bars customers from joining class actions lawsuits over grievances.

Clements said he's represented more than 200 clients with claims against the company, and according to documents and communications reviewed by Bloomberg, has recovered about \$1.4 million. His remaining clients are still owed \$1.3 million, Clements said. Most of his cases have been resolved outside of arbitration. In June, StubHub agreed to issue payments to roughly 100 of his clients, totaling more than \$160,000, according to communications reviewed by Bloomberg.

As a one-man operation, Clements can only work so many cases. He takes on clients pro bono, living off his investment portfolio and the attorney's fees StubHub retroactively pays him when a case concludes, a model that makes it difficult to hire staff. Much of his practice gets done in Menlo Park, California, where he said he works 10 hours a day, sometimes through weekends, with his golden doodle Chu Chu by his side.

After law school, Clements spent five years as a prosecutor in Texas mostly in family violence cases. He later shifted to litigation investing, where those who fund lawsuits receive a portion of the proceeds if a case goes the plaintiff's way. He rarely practiced law in the years before his friend came to him with a claim against StubHub.





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In 2024, the individual used StubHub to purchase two tickets to see a football game between rivals Texas and Texas A&M. A few hours before the game, StubHub said the tickets wouldn't be delivered and offered the individual replacement tickets or a full refund. That was despite StubHub being aware that the tickets wouldn't be delivered for over a month before informing the individual, according to an arbitration award reviewed by Bloomberg.

Clements represented the individual in an arbitration proceeding that lasted 10 months. In the end, StubHub awarded the individual the \$5,600 initially requested plus interest that covered the additional costs incurred on last-minute ticket purchases through StubHub, which were never accessed due to a technical complication, and SeatGeek. StubHub also paid out more than \$28,000 in attorney's fees.

"The prosecutor in me said: 'I want to dig deeper,'" Clements said. "I'm not ready to just go away after this one case."

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