

## Seagate Beats Patent Suit Over Hard Drive Writers At Trial

By **Matthew Santoni**

*Law360 (April 15, 2022, 2:29 PM EDT)* -- Computer hard drive manufacturer Seagate Technology did not infringe another company's patent with components of its hard drives, but didn't prove the patent itself was invalid, a Pennsylvania federal jury has found.

Lambeth Magnetic Structures LLC could not convince the Pittsburgh jurors that Seagate had copied its patents for certain magnetic crystal structures for use in the "heads" that write data to Seagate hard drives. But Seagate also could not sway the jury to declare that Lambeth's patent for those crystals shouldn't have been granted in the first place.

After nearly two weeks of trial, the jury returned a verdict on Thursday finding that Seagate had not infringed any of the 10 claims Lambeth asserted in its patent.

"Our entire trial team is pleased that the jury returned a complete defense verdict of non-infringement for Seagate," said David J.F. Gross of Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP, representing Seagate. "It was a total team effort."

Lambeth, formed by former Carnegie Mellon University professor David Lambeth, had filed suit against Seagate in 2016, claiming that several microscopic layers in the write heads of Seagate's hard drives infringed a patent he'd first filed for in 2002. Lambeth's invention, he said, allowed data to be reliably written more densely onto computer hard drives, increasing their capacity.

Seagate contested Lambeth's claims, arguing that its hard drive write heads didn't follow the structure of ultra-thin magnetic layers and crystals described in the patent — and that Lambeth's description of those structures in his patent application wasn't specific enough to be valid.

"LMS accuses of infringement only three ultra-thin layers of materials — which are not visible to the human eye — found in the tip of Seagate's write heads," the company's pretrial brief said. "But Seagate's write heads do not use, and Seagate has no interest in using, the crystal structures claimed in the patent."

Seagate's hard drives did not have the particular crystal structures or the magnetic properties described by the patent, and both sides sought at trial to have experts testify about microscopic testing and examinations of Seagate's components that was supposed to show their similarities or differences.

The start of the trial was delayed several times due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It had originally been

scheduled for June 2020, but kept getting pushed back, most recently being moved from February to the beginning of April, when the case finally went before a jury.

U.S. District Judge Cathy Bissoon issued an order Friday that if Seagate wanted to ask the court to reconsider the jury's verdict on the invalidity allegations, the parties had until Monday to file a joint notice of whether the court needed to consider additional evidence or could make a ruling based on what had already been introduced.

An attorney for Lambeth declined to comment Friday.

The patent at issue is U.S. Patent No. 7,128,988.

Lambeth Magnetic Structures is represented by Denise De Mory, Corey Johanningmeier, Richard C. Lin, Jennifer L. Gilbert and Michael Flynn-O'Brien of Bunsow De Mory LLP, Patrick J. McElhinny, Christopher M. Verdini and Anna Shabalov of K&L Gates LLP and John W. McIlvaine III and Christian D. Ehret of The Webb Law Firm.

Seagate Technology and Seagate Technology Holdings are represented by David Gross, Chad Drown, Kevin Wagner, Kate Razavi, Helen Chacon, Luke Tomsich, Kelly Fermoye, Kirsten Elfstrand and Shelley Meyer of Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP and Eric G. Soller and John A. Schwab of Pietragallo Gordon Alfano Bosick & Raspanti LLP.

The case is Lambeth Magnetic Structures v. Seagate Technology Holdings et al., case number 2:16-cv-00538, in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania.

--Editing by Nicole Bleier.