

Lawsuit slams Pokemon GO Fest as 'unplayable'

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Tyler CZ (last names abbreviated on request), shouts, "It's not working!" towards Pokémon GO Fest staff on stage in response to the Pokémon GO game server not allowing several fest participants to play at Grant Park on July 22, 2017. | Max Herman/For the Sun-Times.

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A complaint filed Thursday against the organizers of last weekend's Pokemon GO Fest in downtown Chicago seeks to recoup damages through a class action lawsuit for those who attended the festival and found the game to be "unplayable."

Pokemon GO Fest, held Saturday in Grant Park to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the release of the popular mobile game, [was marred by technical glitches from the start](#) — nearly two hours after the fest began, players were still waiting to be let in. Then server and software problems and overloaded cell towers kept players from logging on.

“I know that some of you guys have had trouble getting logged on this morning, and I wanted to let you know that we’re working with the cell companies — AT&T, Sprint, Verizon — trying to get that worked out,” John Hanke, the chief executive officer of Niantic, Inc., which released Pokemon Go in July 2016, told the crowd, which booed in return.

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The suit seeks damages from Niantic, Inc. on behalf of Jonathan Norton and others similarly situated, according to court documents. Norton said he traveled from California to attend the festival, which promised attendees the opportunity to enjoy the game with about 20,000 other players.

Attendees paid \$20 for tickets — with some paying hundreds more on the secondary market, according to the suit. They were also told that by attending, they could work with players — called trainers — and receive a special in-app medal for going to the festival and “special 2 km Eggs” at PokeStops within the park.



Festival attendees expected a day of capturing rare 3D monsters and previously unavailable Pokemon with their friends and family, “but the reality of the Fest fell flat in comparison” to Niantic’s promises, the suit says. Instead, attendees had to wait in a “3 mile line” for an “unplayable” game.

The suit says Niantic should have known to anticipate overloaded cell towers and a lack of internet connectivity at the festivals, “a widely-known problem at highly-populated festivals in Chicago.”



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The suit claims Niantic violated the Illinois Consumer Fraud Act by misleading attendees, as well as several California consumer protection laws. Norton and others like him purchased tickets to the festival, paid for transportation to Chicago and local accommodations to their detriment when the fest did not turn out as it was promised.

The suit claims Niantic will attempt to hold similar festivals in Yokohoma, Japan and across Europe in the future, which “as avid players of the Game” Norton and other attendees of the Chicago festival might attend and seeks to require Niantic to prevent similar issues from occurring at those festivals.

The suit seeks unspecified damages to be determined at a jury trial.