



**Benjamin J.  
Hamborg**

**Court J.  
Anderson**

**David  
Bradley  
Olsen\***

**John N.  
Bisanz Jr.**

# Ventura Trial Team

Jury agreed that 'American Sniper' defamed former governor

If there's one thing Jesse Ventura knows, it's that he can rely on the Minneapolis law firm of Henson & Efron.

The firm helped him win a verdict of more than \$800,000 against the World Wrestling Federation in the 1990s for defrauding the former pro wrestler and Minnesota governor and exploiting his name, voice and likeness.

When Ventura decided to sue fellow former Navy SEAL Chris Kyle for defamation in Kyle's 2012 book "American Sniper" and book-promotion interviews, he turned again to Henson & Efron.

Last July, the team of David B. Olsen, Court J. Anderson, John N. Bisanz Jr. and Benjamin J. Hamborg helped Ventura win \$500,000 for defamation and more than \$1.34 million for "unjust enrichment" in a federal jury award.

It wasn't easy, according to lead attorney Olsen. Kyle was considered a national hero for his military service. After Kyle was killed at a firing range in 2013, the media and the public questioned why Ventura continued the suit



against Kyle's estate, whose executor was Kyle's widow.

Then there's Ventura himself — larger than life, a celebrity, author and former politician known for making controversial statements.

The trial team had to convince the jury that this case wasn't about what Ventura had done or said. It was about the damage Kyle's book and interviews had done to Ventura's reputation, Olsen said.

"Chris Kyle had a hero complex," Olsen added. "He always had to be the big man in the room."

One particular room — a barroom full of former Navy SEALs, including several friends of Kyle — set the scene for the lawsuit. Olsen made a map of the room and a time frame to show the jury how widely those friends' testimony varied about Kyle's story of punching Ventura.

"It looked like a dartboard up there," Olsen said. "Not one of them actually saw Jesse Ventura get punched. Not one of them heard the alleged statements."

The gathering was in honor of a deceased SEAL. Olsen showed that Kyle fabricated an encounter with Ventura where Ventura supposedly said, "The SEALs deserve to lose a few."

The story doesn't end with this jury verdict. In December, Ventura had Olsen file suit against HarperCollins, alleging that the "American Sniper" publisher made millions of dollars based on the "false and defamatory" segment of Kyle's book that led to the first trial. Stay tuned.

—Nancy Crotti