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Calif. Court Rejects Simpson Appeal

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SAN FRANCISCO — The California Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected O.J. Simpson's bid to overturn the \$33.5 million civil court judgment against him for the deaths of ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend, Ronald Goldman.

None of the justices voted to review Simpson's appeal.

The former football star was acquitted of criminal charges in the case in 1995. He was then sued for wrongful death by the victims' survivors, found liable for the killings and ordered to pay \$33.5 million in damages.

Simpson, who has said he can't afford to pay the sum, had asked the Supreme Court to reverse the judgment, saying the civil case was "built on top of a failed prosecution, a prosecution which was suspect for corruption, fraud, contamination, coercion and collusion."

Contacted at his Florida home, Simpson said he intends to take his appeal to the federal courts, perhaps as high as the U.S. Supreme Court.

"There is no way you can tell me this was a fair trial," Simpson said. "If you're right, you fight."

Simpson, who wrote his appeal without the assistance of counsel, was told by his lawyers to "throw in the towel" on further appeals, according to Henry Johnson, a Simpson friend and adviser.

Simpson had argued that he was denied a fair civil trial because he was unable to question disgraced police Detective Mark Fuhrman, who invoked his Fifth Amendment right to remain silent. An appeals court ruled that Fuhrman's

exclusion from the civil trial was legal.

Simpson also said his trial was unfair because he could not introduce missing phone records that he says would exonerate him. Simpson claims the records would show his ex-wife was alive at the time he entered a limousine for a ride to a Los Angeles airport.

Edward Horowitz, a lawyer for the Brown family, said Simpson has paid "a couple hundred thousand" from the judgment through the sale of furnishings and his Heisman Trophy but doesn't think the families will collect much more.

"The significance of this decision is that the only jury that ever heard Simpson testify found by clear and convincing evidence that he did it, and the court decided not to take the case," Horowitz said.

Simpson lives in Florida on a hefty pension plan. Pensions are exempt from civil court judgments, but any money Simpson earns could be seized immediately by the court. Florida law prevents the victims' families from seizing Simpson's house.

"If he makes any money, we'll try to seize it," said Peter Gelblum, the Goldman family attorney.

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