



Intellectual Property Update

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Federal Circuit Clarifies Patent Eligibility for Automated Dumbbell Technology

In *PowerBlock Holdings Inc. v. iFit Inc.*, No. 2024-1177 (August 11, 2025), the Federal Circuit reversed a district court ruling that had deemed most claims of a patent for an automated dumbbell weight-adjustment system ineligible under 35 U.S.C. § 101. The patent at issue describes a selectorized dumbbell system that allows users to adjust weights electronically, addressing safety and convenience concerns associated with manual adjustment.

The district court had previously granted a partial motion to dismiss, finding that the patent claims were directed to the abstract idea of automating weight selection and were implemented with generic components. Applying the Supreme Court's two-step *Alice* framework, the court concluded that the claims did not add "significantly more" to the abstract idea and therefore failed the § 101 eligibility test.

The Federal Circuit disagreed with the district court's analysis, emphasizing that the claims were not merely abstract but instead recited a specific mechanical implementation. The court noted that the claims were limited to a particular dumbbell configuration with defined structural components, including a stack of nested weight plates, a handle, a movable selector, and an electric motor that physically moves the selector to adjust the weight.

These elements, the Federal Circuit held, described a specific implementation of a technological improvement over prior art rather than merely automating a known process. The court rejected arguments that the claims were defined solely by their function or desired result, citing the patent's detailed description of how the system physically

moves the selector to automatically adjust dumbbell weights. The decision distinguished the case from prior rulings in which claims were found ineligible for lacking meaningful limitations or merely reciting "do it on a computer."

Businesses developing automated solutions for mechanical devices may find stronger support for patent eligibility if their claims recite a sufficiently specific implementation that is tied to a technological improvement.

The decision highlights the value of drafting claims that clearly articulate the structural and functional aspects of an invention, rather than merely reciting desired results.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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