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JURY FINDS PUCKETT GUILTY OF DESTROYING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

State Attorney Melissa Nelson announces that a Duval County jury found James Puckett guilty of an Offense Against Intellectual Property. With the verdict, Puckett faces up to five years in Florida State Prison. The Honorable Anthony Salem will sentence Puckett at a later date.

On Dec. 12, 2018, TendedBar hired Puckett to assist in the development and operation of automated beverage machines that make and serve drinks without a human server. Puckett was paid a salary and given equity in the company; Puckett also signed a confidentiality and nondisclosure agreement to protect the company's intellectual property. Per the agreement, Puckett signed the sole rights to TendedBar for the invention along with his work that went into it. For his job, Puckett had remote and secure access to all the machines. Through most of 2020, TendedBar requested from Puckett a tangible copy or production of the machines' source code, which controls the entire operation and had been continuously developed by the TendedBar team. In 2021, TendedBar signed a contract with the Jacksonville Jaguars to place eight machines inside the stadium. Those machines were set to become operational on Sept. 19, 2021. Days before, Puckett called TendedBar leadership and argued about the source code; he refused to provide it unless he was named Chief Technology Officer and made an equal partner with the company by the end of the day. Knowing of Puckett's access and the possibility of remote sabotage, TendedBar leadership quickly had employees unplug all the machines at the stadium and the nearby arena to take them offline and prevent remote access. However, they discovered one machine had been made inoperable mere minutes after Puckett made his demands. Investigators were able to confirm through hard drive data that Puckett signed onto the machine and deleted files. After further investigation, Puckett was arrested.

The case was investigated by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and prosecuted by Assistant State Attorneys Dan Cardenas and Joe Licandro.