

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

In re SanDisk SSDs Litigation

In re SanDisk SSDs Litigation · No. 23-cv-04152-RFL (LJC) · Decided August 11, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California addresses motions to reopen depositions, disputes concerning the deposition of SanDisk’s Rule 30(b)(6) witness Matthew White, and motions to file exhibits under seal. The court permits limited reopening of depositions to address documents produced after the original depositions and related follow-up questions, while denying sanctions concerning the canceled White deposition. The court grants specified sealing motions and orders Plaintiffs to publicly file an exhibit that Defendants did not seek to seal.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Lisa J. Cisneros
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	August 11, 2025
DOCKET	23-cv-04152-RFL (LJC)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiffs moved to reopen several depositions after defendants produced documents previously designated as privileged, and the parties submitted letters concerning the scope of a reopened Rule 30(b)(6) deposition. Plaintiffs also sought sanctions under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 37(d)(1)(A), and the parties filed administrative motions to seal exhibits.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Discretionary management of discovery and deposition scope; application of Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 30 and 37 and the standards governing sealing judicial records.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished, nonprecedential district-court order
PARTIES	Plaintiffs v. Defendants, including SanDisk LLC

TOPICS

discovery dispute

sanctions

civil procedure

commercial litigation

PRACTICE AREAS

Civil procedure

Discovery

Commercial litigation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether plaintiffs should be permitted to reopen three employee depositions to address documents produced after the original depositions.
2. What subjects and limitations should govern the reopened deposition of SanDisk LLC's Rule 30(b)(6) witness, Dr. Matthew White.
3. Whether defendants' cancellation of the scheduled White deposition warranted sanctions under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 37(d)(1)(A).
4. Whether the parties had shown sufficient cause to seal specified exhibits filed in connection with the discovery motions.

HOLDINGS

1. The court granted plaintiffs a limited opportunity to reopen three depositions because defendants' failure to produce discoverable documents before the original depositions impeded plaintiffs' examinations.
2. The reopened depositions were limited to questions concerning documents produced after the original depositions, testimony from other reopened depositions, and reasonable follow-up questions, rather than serving as complete do-overs.
3. White's reopened deposition was limited to the specific questions he was wrongfully instructed not to answer, relevant follow-up questions, questions concerning documents produced after the original deposition, and related matters within the Rule 30(b)(6) topics for which he had been designated.
4. Plaintiffs' request for sanctions under Rule 37(d)(1)(A) was denied because defendants' conduct was substantially consistent with Rule 37(d)(2)'s recognition that a party need not appear for a deposition while a motion for a protective order is pending.
5. The court granted the sealing motions as to the specified exhibits upon a sufficient showing of good cause, while requiring Exhibit 13 to be filed publicly because defendants had not pursued its sealing.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The Court is inclined to grant Plaintiffs the opportunity they were previously denied to question the witnesses about those documents, at least some of which relate specifically to each of these witnesses.” (at 2)

“Although the showing necessary to seal documents filed in connection with such disputes is relaxed as compared to contexts more closely connected to the merits of the case, discovery disputes are not “private” when conducted in the federal courts, the public still has an interest in access to the judicial process, and a party seeking to seal such materials must still make a particularized showing of good cause.” (at 5)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Defendants withdrew privilege designations for most of the disputed documents and produced them after several employees had already been deposed. Defendants had also initially failed to provide a privilege log as required by Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 26(b)(5), and the court determined that most of the remaining disputed documents were not privileged, at least in their entirety. In a separate dispute, defense counsel instructed SanDisk's Rule 30(b)(6) witness, Dr. Matthew White, not to answer certain questions, and defendants later canceled a scheduled reopened deposition while seeking court guidance on its scope.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Judge Lin referred the question whether witnesses should be re-deposed to Magistrate Judge Cisneros. The court granted limited reopening of three depositions and limited the reopened deposition of Matthew White to specified subjects. The court denied plaintiffs' request for sanctions arising from defendants' cancellation of the deposition, granted the sealing motions in specified respects, and ordered plaintiffs to publicly file Exhibit 13.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Ctr. for Auto Safety v. Chrysler Grp., LLC, 809 F.3d 1092, 1103 (9th Cir. 2016)

OPINION

In re Sandisk SSDS Litigation

PER CURIAM.

1 2

3 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

4 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

5 6 In re SANDISK SSDs LITIGATION. Case No. 23-cv-04152-RFL (LJC)

7 ORDER REGARDING MOTION TO
8 REOPEN DEPOSITIONS, LETTERS

8 REGARDING DEPOSITION OF MATT
WHITE, AND MOTIONS TO FILE

9 UNDER SEAL

Re: Dkt. Nos. 174, 175, 188, 191, 195, 196 10 11 A. Motion to Reopen Discovery 12 Plaintiffs
move to reopen fact discovery to reopen three depositions of Defendants’ 13 employees in light of
Defendants’ belated production of documents that Defendants had 14 previously designated as
privileged. ECF No. 174. Judge Lin referred the question of “whether 15 the witnesses should be
re-deposed” to the undersigned magistrate judge, and indicated that 16 “discovery may be
reopened for the limited purpose of accommodating those depositions” if the 17 undersigned
found them to be warranted. ECF No. 180. 18 There is no dispute that Defendants withdrew their
privilege designations as to the vast 19 majority of documents in dispute, and produced those

documents after the witnesses at issue were 20 deposed. Defendants also failed initially to provide a privilege log as required by Rule 26(b)(5) of 21 the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. And of the relatively small number of documents for which 22 the parties were not able to resolve their privilege disputes, this Court has found that most of those 23 also are not privileged (at least not in their entirety) and should have been produced (at least with 24 redactions). ECF No. 198. 25 Defendants dispute whether the documents at issue include sufficient relevant information, 26 not previously known to Plaintiffs, to warrant reopening the depositions of these particular 27 employees. But where Defendants have brought this situation on themselves by withholding 1 Plaintiffs' assessment of the potential relevance of the documents. Under Rule 30 of the Federal 2 Rules of Civil Procedure, "[t]he court must allow additional time [for depositions] consistent with 3 Rule 26(b)(1) and (2) if needed to fairly examine the deponent or if the deponent, another person,

4 or any other circumstance impedes or delays the examination." Fed. R. Civ. P. 30(d)(1). 5 Defendants impeded these examinations by failing to produce documents subject to discovery 6 prior to the depositions. The Court is inclined to grant Plaintiffs the opportunity they were 7 previously denied to question the witnesses about those documents, at least some of which relate 8 specifically to each of these witnesses. 9 This Order is intended to redress Defendants' previous failure to produce documents, not 10 to grant Plaintiffs a complete do-over of previous depositions. To that end, the reopened 11 depositions shall be limited to questions pertaining to documents produced after the original 12 deposition,¹ questions pertaining to testimony from other witnesses' reopened depositions, and 13 reasonable follow-up questions to the witnesses' responses to those questions. Plaintiffs' failure 14 to abide by those limits shall not be grounds to instruct a witness not to answer or suspend a 15 deposition, but after the deposition has concluded Defendants may seek any relief that they believe 16 appropriate for a substantial violation of this Order, potentially including the exclusion of 17 evidence or attorneys' fees for wasted time. 18 The Court further notes that while the parties dispute the likely effect of such reopened 19 deposition on the case schedule, see ECF No. 187, it appears feasible to complete three reopened 20 depositions (or four, including Matthew White as discussed below) for the limited purpose 21 allowed by this Order without altering the October 14, 2025 deadline for class certification and 22 Rule 702 motions, particularly if the documents at issue are of as limited relevance as Defendants

23 contend. This Court expects that the parties will be able to supplement their expert reports to 24 25 1 It is not clear if any other documents were produced after these depositions beyond what was at issue in the parties' disputes over Defendants' privilege assertions. If other documents were also 26 produced after the depositions, Plaintiffs may also ask about any such documents. Defendants may not be to blame for other document productions occurring after the depositions, but when the 27 depositions will be reopened anyway to account for Defendants' unwarranted privilege 1 account for new testimony without materially affecting the case schedule. That said, if any party 2

believes that the schedule set by Judge Lin should be altered, that is a matter to be addressed to Judge Lin. 4 B. Deposition of Matthew White 5 The parties previously filed a joint letter raising disputes over instructions not to answer 6 and other purported misconduct during Plaintiffs' deposition of Defendant SanDisk LLC's Rule 7 30(b)(6) witness Dr. Matthew White. ECF No. 164. Plaintiff sought to reopen the deposition, id. 8 at 1, and Defendants "agreed to produce him for deposition again as Defendants' Rule 30(b)(6) 9 designee for the limited basis that Plaintiffs may obtain responses to questions (as well as 10 responses to natural follow-up questions to Mr. White's responses) that defense counsel had 11 instructed Mr. White not to answer because they deemed the questions to be outside the scope of" 12 the deposition notice. Id. at 3–4 n.1. The Court acknowledged Defendants' agreement as to those 13 questions, ECF No. 165 at 1, and held in response to the parties disputes over instructions not to 14 answer based on attorney-client privilege that "Plaintiffs may ask White questions going to 15 whether attorneys provided SanDisk employees with business advice (including public relations 16 advice) as distinct from legal advice," and "about the substance of those communications" if so, 17 id. at 3. The Court also mentioned in a footnote that "instructions not to answer for other reasons 18 unrelated to privilege are also generally improper," citing an instance where defense counsel 19 instructed White not to answer a question on the basis that he had already answered the same 20 question. Id. at 1 n.1. 21 The parties now dispute whether the reopened deposition should be limited to the issues 22 addressed in that Order. "Defendants maintain that the scope is limited to the issues articulated in 23 [the] May 22, 2025, order, while Plaintiffs believe that the reopened deposition is limited to the 24 list of Rule 30(b)(6) topics Dr. White was previously designated to testify to on behalf of 25 SanDisk." ECF No. 195. 26 Plaintiffs' original arguments for reopening this deposition identified specific instances of 27 purportedly unwarranted instructions not to answer and other purported misconduct. ECF No. 164 1 Plaintiffs as to most of their arguments. ECF No. 165. But Plaintiffs did not argue specifically at 2 the time that the deposition misconduct at issue prevented Plaintiffs from effectively deposing 3 White beyond the particular lines of questioning addressed in the parties' joint letter. Plaintiffs 4 now argue that "the deposition was cut short after a few hours," and that they were unable to 5 obtain probative testimony even beyond the specific issues addressed in the previous Order. ECF

6 No. 195 at 4. But Plaintiffs raised no such argument in the previous joint letter, and the transcript 7 excerpt submitted with the present letter indicates that Plaintiffs' counsel chose to end the 8 deposition: 9 MR. BOGDANOVICH: What's the -- yeah, I don't think I have any more questions for today. 10 I -- Counsel, just while I'm on the record, we're reserving the right to 11 reopen this deposition, given the many privilege objections. 12 But, otherwise, based on what you've allowed me to ask of the witness today, I have no further questions. 13 14 ECF No. 195-1 at 3 (Tr. at 196:10–17). 15 That Plaintiffs apparently ended the deposition with several hours of allotted time still 16 remaining weighs against, not in favor of, allowing them to resume questioning on matters beyond 17 the improper instructions not to answer that they presented to the Court. 18 The Court's

previous Order was intended to allow the deposition to be reopened to address the specific questions that White wrongfully refused to answer or was instructed not to answer, “as well as any relevant follow-up questions that might flow from White’s answers.” See ECF No. 21 at 165. To the extent that such a limitation was not clear from the previous Order, the Court now limits the reopened deposition to that scope, as well as the same parameters applicable to the other reopened depositions in light of Defendants’ unwarranted privilege designations, to the extent that such questions fall within the topics for which White was originally designated to testify under Rule 30(b)(6). As with the depositions addressed above, those limitations are not 27 2 The Court has authorized questions pertaining to documents produced after the original 1 grounds to instruct White not to answer questions or to suspend the deposition, but Defendants 2 may seek relief for substantial violations after the deposition has concluded. 3 Plaintiffs seek sanctions under Rule 37(d)(1)(A)(i) for Defendants unilaterally canceling 4 the deposition to present this dispute over its scope to the Court. ECF No. 196. “A failure 5 described in Rule 37(d)(1)(A) is not excused on the ground that the discovery sought was 6 objectionable, unless the party failing to act has a pending motion for a protective order under 7 Rule 26(c).” Fed. R. Civ. P. 37(d)(2).

8 Defendants notified Plaintiffs that the “deposition is canceled” on July 18, 2025. ECF No. 9 196-1 at 2. The deposition was scheduled for July 23, 2025. The parties filed their joint letter, in 10 which Defendants sought a protective order, on July 25, 2025. ECF No. 196. 11 The Court is concerned about the short notice on which this issue arose, but it is not clear 12 that blame for the parties’ late realization that they had different understandings of the scope of the 13 deposition lies solely with Defendants. Once the dispute became clear, and it was clear that the 14 parties would not reach an agreement to resolve it, Defendants notified Plaintiffs promptly that 15 they would seek relief from the Court and would not go forward with the deposition. This Court’s 16 Standing Order did not allow Defendants to file a unilateral motion for such relief, instead 17 requiring that the parties meet and confer and cooperate to prepare a joint letter. Defendants 18 offered to provide their portion of a joint letter on the following business day (Monday, July 21, 19 2025), and the parties “engaged in [a] meet-and-confer call[] on July . . . 23 without coming to a 20 resolution.” ECF No. 195 at 1.3 Under the circumstances, the Court finds Defendants’ conduct 21 substantially consistent with Rule 37(d)(2)’s recognition that a party need not appear for a 22 deposition while a motion for a protective order is pending. Plaintiffs’ request for sanctions under 23 Rule 37(d)(1)(A) is DENIED.

24 C. Motions to File Under Seal 25 Plaintiffs filed an administrative motion to consider sealing two exhibits (Exhibits 3 and 7) 26 27 3 The parties’ filings do not specifically address whether they met in person or by videoconference 1 filed in connection with the motion to reopen discovery, based on Defendants’ confidentiality 2 || designations. ECF No. 175. Defendants filed a response asserting confidentiality interests in 3 those internal communications. ECF No. 182. Defendants also filed an administrative motion to 4 || file documents under seal in connection with

their opposition brief. ECF No. 188. Sufficient cause having been shown, those sealing motions are GRANTED. 6 Plaintiffs belatedly filed an administrative motion to consider sealing two other exhibits 7 || filed in connection with the same motion to reopen discovery, again based on Defendants' 8 confidentiality designations. ECF No. 191. Defendants seek sealing of only one of those exhibits, 9 || Exhibit 14. ECF No. 192. Sufficient cause having been shown in Defendants' response and from 10 the face of the document, the motion is GRANTED as to Exhibit 14, which will remain under seal. 11 To complete the public record, Plaintiffs are ORDERED to file Exhibit 13 (for which 12 || Defendants have not pursued sealing) in the public docket no later than August 18, 2025. 5 13 The Court's granting Defendants' request to seal should not be construed as endorsing 14 || Defendants' position that the "public . . . has no legitimate interest in this private discovery 15 dispute." See, e.g., ECF No. 182 at 3. Although the showing necessary to seal documents filed in 16 || connection with such disputes is relaxed as compared to contexts more closely connected to the 3 17 || merits of a case, discovery disputes are not "private" when conducted in the federal courts, the S 18 || public still has an interest in access to the judicial process, and a party seeking to seal such 19 materials must still make a particularized showing of good cause. Defendants have met that 20 standard here, notwithstanding their incorrect assertion of a lack of any legitimate public interest. 21 This Order does not reach the question of whether "compelling reasons" would support 22 || sealing any of these documents if they were filed in a context "more than tangentially related to 23 the merits" of the case. See generally *Ctr. for Auto Safety v. Chrysler Grp., LLC*, 809 F.3d 1092, 24 1103 (9th Cir. 2016). 25 IT IS SO ORDERED. 26 Dated: August 11, 2025 37 Zar Arty

A J. CISNEROS

28 ited States Magistrate Judge