

Parents of Elite Gymnast Sue U.S. Olympic Committee in Sex-Abuse Claim

Lawsuit marks escalation of a festering scandal concerning years of alleged abuse by a former U.S. gymnastics team doctor

SPORTS

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The parents of a former elite gymnast have sued the U.S. Olympic Committee and USA Gymnastics in connection with allegations of years-long sexual abuse by a former team doctor, according to a complaint filed in Los Angeles Superior Court late last month.

The lawsuit, which was filed June 30 but hasn't been previously reported, marks an escalation of the festering scandal that has shaken the sport and its governing body. It is the first among the scores of civil claims related to the scandal to allege wrongdoing by the U.S. Olympic Committee, and represents the first



Former USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar is seen in court on June 23.

involvement of civil-rights attorney Gloria Allred.

Allred, known for taking on high-profile sexual-abuse cases, filed the lawsuit along with John Manly, a plaintiffs' lawyer who is leading

much of the litigation related to the scandal.

The lawsuit was filed under pseudonyms for the gymnast's parents and seeks damages for negligence, intentional infliction of

emotional distress and other civil claims. The parents argue that both USA Gymnastics and the U.S. Olympic Committee bear responsibility because the gymnast was under the care of those organizations at the time of the alleged assaults by physician Larry Nassar, and the parents believe those groups conspired to keep the alleged abuse secret in order to protect their reputations.

Patrick Sandusky, a spokesman for the U.S. Olympic Committee, declined to comment on the specific allegations because he said the organization had not been served with the lawsuit. "The allegations surrounding Nassar are astounding and heartbreaking," he said in a statement. "We were not made aware of them until Nassar had already been reported to law enforcement. We will support any and all efforts to shine a light on the facts and to



identify and address any systemic failures that contributed to the abuse that was suffered by these young women."

A spokeswoman for USA Gymnastics said, "This is the first USA Gymnastics has heard of this lawsuit and declines to comment further." Allred declined to comment.

While the suit does not reveal the gymnast's identity, the complaint says she competed nationally and internationally between 2009 and 2013, and that she was regularly "subjected to sexual harassment, abuse and molestation" by Nassar.

Nassar, an osteopathic physician, served as a volunteer trainer and doctor for the U.S. national team for almost 30 years. The state of Michigan charged him in November with first-degree criminal sexual conduct stemming from allegations involving a family friend who was under 13 years old; the state attorney general has since added more than 20 additional counts related to other victims, including gymnasts.

In December, federal prosecutors in Michigan charged Nassar with possession of child pornography. He is expected to plead guilty this week



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to the federal child-pornography counts, a person familiar with the matter said. The expected guilty plea was reported this weekend by the Detroit News.

The child-pornography charges are unrelated to Nassar's work with gymnasts but he faces numerous civil lawsuits alleging that he sexually abused gymnasts and other athletes. Nassar has pleaded not guilty to the other pending charges against him and denied wrongdoing.

Nassar's lawyer declined to comment on his client's reported guilty plea, and didn't respond to a request for comment Sunday about the gymnast's lawsuit.

According to the June 30 lawsuit, the gymnast's parents, who live in California, first learned their daughter may have been sexually abused by Nassar in mid-July 2015. USA Gymnastics at that time was conducting a five-week internal investigation into a national team

member's claim that Nassar was molesting her, The Wall Street Journal reported in February.

During that investigation, USA Gymnastics spoke with several national team members, then referred the matter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation at the end of July 2015, the Journal reported.

"I think these parents feel an incredible sense of betrayal," Manly said of the lawsuit, adding that Nassar was often unsupervised when seeing gymnasts at U.S. Olympic Committee-sponsored events and at the Karolyi Ranch training center in Texas. "Your daughter competes for her country on the national team and this horrific activity happens."

The parents faced a potential statute-of-limitations deadline, whereas their daughter has a longer time frame in which to file a claim, said Manly, who also represents the gymnast.

USA Gymnastics is already facing three other lawsuits in California brought by former elite gymnasts, including a member of the bronze-medal winning 2000 Olympic women's team, a former national team member, and a member of the

