



PRESS RELEASE

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April 11, 2019

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ORANGE COUNTY WATER POLO CHILD SEX ABUSE SCANDAL GROWS AS TWO MORE LAWSUITS ARE FILED AGAINST COACHES

Irvine, California - Attorneys representing Orange County female water polo athletes filed two new lawsuits alleging sexual abuse by Kennedy High School/USA Water Polo coaches while the girls were minors. Seven lawsuits comprising claims related to total ten total victims have been filed related to the alleged abuse they suffered at the hands of Coaches Joshua Owens and Bahram Hojreh.

One new Complaint details allegations by a fourth former student against John F Kennedy High School, Anaheim Unified School District, Principal Russell Earnest, Athletic Director David Jankowski, Co-Athletic Director Dean Wang, Coach Eric Pierce, teacher Ian Sabala and former water polo coach Joshua Owens.

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The suit alleges that after years of sexually abusive conduct by Joshua Owens and the failures of the administration and staff to remove him, that he continued to sexually harass the latest victim. As with the other victims, his sexually charged behavior was directed at this latest victim, a student that was part of the swim team during the period in which Owens was a coach. As indicated in the filing, the administrations motivated decision not to remove Owens, despite repeated notices that he was abusing students, led directly to his belief that he could assault and harass any female student that he coached.

The second suit was filed against USA Water Polo, International Water Polo and former Water Polo coach Barham Hojreh. According to the Complaint, the victim was a minor at the time of the alleged assaults which included Hojreh reaching underneath Plaintiff's swimsuits to fondle, grope and pinch Plaintiff's vagina, and having the victim climb up and down Hojreh's body wearing nothing but a speedo. This behavior occurred under the predicate that it was part of water polo practice.

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The suit alleges that Hojreh had previously engaged in abusive behavior of female minors at University High School in Irvine, California including, but not limited to, touching female children inappropriately, engaging in verbally and physically abusive behavior towards the female minors who were players on Hojreh's water polo team, resulting in hundreds of complaints by students and their families against Hojreh.

The suit further alleges that Plaintiff alleges that International Water Polo, USA Water Polo received a Safe Sport report in July of 2017, alleging that players on the International Water Polo, team coached by Hojreh were sexually assaulting other players at the Junior Olympic Qualifying tournament and the IE Challenge. In that report, the players for Hojreh's team were assaulting other teams, performing the identical assaults that those members had done to them by Hojreh. The reports indicate that USA

Water Polo became aware that Hojreh was teaching his athletes to “sexually assault” others under the guise of training, but that USA Water Polo failed to take any action against Hojreh.

“As an Orange County parent, I am disgusted by the behavior of USA Water Polo and the Anaheim Union School District in these cases,” said victims’ attorney Morgan Stewart. “The fact that Anaheim Union continues to employ those that allowed a sexual predator to assault their female students is horrific and shows utter contempt for sexual assault victims.”

“Youth sports are meant to be a safe and healthy activity for our children, but these two institutions allowed girls’ water polo to become a playground for predators. It is time to hold those who enabled this abuse accountable as the number of victims continues to grow,” said Mr. Stewart.

[Manly, Stewart & Finaldi](#) is the nation’s leading firm representing athletes in child sexual abuse cases against school districts, Universities and Olympic Governing Bodies. They recently represented 180 alleged victims of former Olympic Team doctor Larry Nassar resulting in a \$500 million-dollar settlement against Michigan State University. In 2018 the firm settled cases against the Torrance Unified School District for \$31 million on behalf of alleged victims of former wrestling coach and convicted child molester Thomas Snider, against Los Angeles Unified School district for \$8 million in cases involving former football coach and convicted child molester Jamie Jimenez and for \$14 million in cases involving former Los Angeles Unified District employee Ronnie Lee Roman.