

Former UO coach files suit for sexual discrimination

Sally Harmon, an 18-year member of the track and field staff, seeks \$1.1 million after her 2003 termination

BY KARA HANSEN
NEWS REPORTER

Former University women's track and field coach Sally Harmon followed through with her October threat to file a lawsuit against the University, alleging the athletic department sexually discriminated against her when she was terminated last year.

In the lawsuit filed Dec. 20 in Lane County Circuit Court, Harmon seeks more than \$1.1 million from the University, Athletic Director Bill Moos, track and field head coach Martin Smith and the state board of higher education.

Harmon, a University graduate and a women's throws events assistant for 18 years, was fired in spring 2003 after the athletic department consolidated the men's and women's track programs.

Olympic hammer thrower Lance Deal, a volunteer men's throws coach since 2002, was hired to coach the combined program despite having "no paid Division I coaching experience" and limited volunteer coaching experience, the lawsuit states.

The lawsuit claims Harmon has lost wages and benefits amounting to \$122,160. Harmon also seeks compensation for other damages, such as emotional distress, sleeplessness, depression, anxiety and shame and humiliation, and punitive damages from Moos and Smith in an amount to be determined at trial.

University officials were not available for comment as of Thursday, but University General Counsel Melinda Grier said in a previous interview that the athletic department's hiring decision was probably acceptable.



SALLY HARMON
FORMER TRACK AND
FIELD COACH

"The reason you choose one person over another is you select the one you believe is most qualified based on what your criteria are," said Grier, who was responding to Harmon's decision in October to file a lawsuit. "That's what happened here."

Harmon's attorney, Suzanne Chanti, was not available for comment.

The lawsuit alleges the University, Moos and Smith "engaged in a pattern and practice of discriminating against women student athletes and employees within the athletic department, including discriminating in pay and benefits," and asserts the gender inequity is long-standing.

In July 2000, Harmon refused to sign her annual contract after learning a new men's assistant coach was being paid \$50,000 while she earned \$35,724, according to the lawsuit. She later received a raise to help rectify the problem, but in an October interview Harmon said she still earned less than the new male coach.

In addition to the upwards of \$1 million sought for emotional distress and the \$122,000 lost in earnings in benefits, the suit requests that Harmon be hired into the combined track program or be paid an amount to be determined at trial.

But the lawsuit is about values, not money, Harmon said in October.

"(The lawsuit is) not going to rectify the damage done to me," she said. "But walking away from this and not making a statement of what's been done, and that it's wrong, would be a slap in the face."

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MELINDA GRIER | General Counsel

Photos: Parents were unable to acquire prints of children

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Parents of the children photographed alerted the University after they unsuccessfully attempted to contact Jackson to obtain the photos. Leavitt said proofs of the photos were sent to about 100 families, but nobody was able to get in contact with Jackson to order reprints.

The University and the Eugene Police Department have not been able to locate any of the photos taken by Jackson and are still searching for them, Leavitt said.

"One of the outstanding concerns for us is, 'Where are the photographs?'" Leavitt said.

As many as 200 children may have been photographed, from infants to 11-year-olds, Leavitt said.

In an e-mail sent to parents by EMU Child Care Center Coordinator Dennis Reynolds, who approved the photography arrangements with Jackson, parents were asked to look for common warning signs of child sexual abuse. Parents should look for children acting out in sexually suggestive behavior, displaying anxiety about separation and showing sudden nervousness around strangers.

"The University is committed to the highest standards of security and accountability and is taking every precaution to ensure that photographers and photographic sessions and other activities will be conducted according to these standards," Reynolds wrote.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION!

Looking for work? Winter Official's Meeting for basketball and floor hockey is on Wednesday, January 5th at 6:00 pm in the SRC Bonus Room. No experience necessary training provided.

Rec Sports

Winter Leagues ... Mandatory Manager's Meeting ... Divisions
Basketball..... January 11 Men's, Women's & Coed
Floor Hockey January 18 Men's, Women's & Coed
Volleyball January 19 Coed only
*Looking for a team? We can help - come and sign up on the free agent list in the Rec Sports Office (102 Esslinger Hall).

Rec Aerobics (drop-in aerobics program)

Rec Aerobics punch card sales begin Monday, January 3rd in 102 Esslinger Hall. Choose from 12 different classes each week including: body sculpting, basic step, stretch & flex and kickboxing. Classes begin on Monday, January 10th. All classes are held in Multipurpose #1 in the SRC.

Group Cycling Program

Registration for non-credit group cycling classes begins on Monday, January 3rd in 102 Esslinger Hall. Space is limited so register early! Classes begin on Monday, January 10th.

Rec Fitness Programs

Whether you are just getting started or you are a regular user at the SRC the Rec Fitness Programs have something just for you! Check out our Fitness Programs: Fitness Orientation (free), Fitness Assessment and the Fun Individualized Training (F.I.T.) Program. For more information call 346-1364.

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