

Soccer

Women accuse US soccer federation of wage discrimination

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

In this July 5, 2015, file photo, the United States Women's National Team celebrates with the trophy after they beat Japan 5-2 in the FIFA Women's World Cup soccer championship in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Five players from the World Cup-winning U.S. national team have accused the U.S. Soccer Federation of wage discrimination in an action filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

AP Photo/Elaine Thompson, File

Five stars from the World Cup-winning U.S. women's national team have accused the U.S. Soccer Federation of wage discrimination in an action filed with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Alex Morgan, Carli Lloyd, Megan Rapinoe, Becky Sauerbrunn and Hope Solo maintain in the EEOC filing that they are paid nearly four times less than their male counterparts on the U.S. men's national team, based on U.S. Soccer's 2015 financial report. The filing was announced Thursday in a statement from the law firm representing the players.

"The numbers speak for themselves," Solo said in the statement. "We are the best in the world, have three World Cup Championships, four Olympic Championships, and the USMNT get paid more just to show up than we get paid to win major championships."

The union representing the players is currently involved in a legal dispute with U.S. Soccer over the terms of their collective bargaining agreement. The federation filed a lawsuit this year seeking to clarify that its contract with the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team Players Association runs through the Rio Olympics until Dec. 31. The union maintains the memorandum of understanding agreed to in March 2013 can be terminated at any time. That case is pending.

Attorney Jeffrey Kessler, one of the attorneys representing the players, claimed that the tenor of the negotiations over the CBA created the need for the women to act in hopes of ending what they

say is the "discriminatory and unfair treatment" they have endured for years.

"The reality is that this team is more valuable to the USSF than the men's team has been. That's what the facts show," Kessler said on a conference call with reporters. "And they would be justified in asking for more than the men are receiving. But the first step that they are seeking is equal treatment."

U.S. Soccer issued a statement maintaining that its "efforts to be advocates for women's soccer are unwavering."

"We are committed to and engaged in negotiating a new collective bargaining agreement that addresses compensation with the Women's National Team Players Association, to take effect when the current CBA expires at the end of this year," the statement said. "U.S. Soccer will continue to be an advocate on the global soccer stage to influence and develop the women's game

and evolve FIFA's compensation model."

The top players on the women's team are paid about \$72,000 a year by U.S. Soccer, along with bonuses, to play in a minimum of 20 exhibitions per year, the EEOC complaint says. Conversely, the men are paid per match, with a minimum of \$5,000 a game, and additional payments based on the opponents' rankings and results.

The women have a potential to earn \$99,000 if they win all 20 exhibitions, while their male counterparts would earn \$100,000 minimum for appearing in the 20 games before the opponents and outcomes are figured in, and possibly as much as \$263,320 a year if they win all of their games.

Citing another example of disparity, the complaint says that the women are paid \$30,000 for making the World Cup team, while the men are paid \$68,750 each.

U.S. maintains that the women's team set up the

compensation structure, including a guaranteed salary rather than a pay-for-play model like the men, in the last collective bargaining agreement. The women earn an additional salary because the federation pays their salaries in the National Women's Soccer League.

The women's national team players also receive other benefits, including health care paid for by the U.S. Olympic Committee, that the men don't receive, the federation maintains.

USSF President Sunil Gulati said Thursday night that many factors are considered when it comes to player compensation, including the revenue the teams generate.

"We think very highly of the women's national team and we want to compensate them fairly, and we'll sit down and work thru that with them when all of this settles down," Gulati said.

The U.S. women won the World Cup last year in Canada with a 5-2 victory

in the final against Japan. The team earned a total of \$2 million for winning the tournament, according to documents. The U.S. men's team earned \$9 million the year before at the World Cup in Brazil, where they were knocked out in the round of 16. The prize payouts came from FIFA, soccer's international governing body, and not from U.S. Soccer.

The federation pays the men and women equally for qualifying for the Olympics and making the roster for the event.

"There are no legitimate non-discriminatory reasons for this gross disparity of wages, nor can it be explained away by any bona fide seniority, merit or incentive system or any other factor other than sex," said the complaint.

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton weighed in on the issue on Twitter: "Wouldn't want to face these women on the field or in the courtroom. Every

woman deserves equal pay."

Landon Donovan, who played 14 seasons with the men's national team, posted to Twitter: "USWNT absolutely deserve to be treated fairly in all ways. Important to remember that these issues are/ can be collectively bargained." He added: "Both USMNT and USWNT should be paid commensurate w/ the revenues they produce, not based upon what the other makes."

The EEOC investigates claims of discrimination on merit. There is no timetable for resolution of the matter. Federal law makes it illegal to discriminate against an employee because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or genetic information.

Many players on the national team have become increasingly vocal about gender equity in the sport, something that came to light in advance of last year's World Cup. A group of players led by Abby Wambach filed a complaint in Canada about the artificial turf playing surface, noting the men's World Cup is played on natural grass.

The players dropped the complaint before the tournament to focus on the competition. Wambach retired from the national team at the end of last year.

"This is a fight that we are going to have to continue to fight from here on forward," Solo said on a conference call. "I don't see it getting any easier, but it is something we are committed to. And it's not just in the sports world, it's everywhere you look."

The U.S. women, who have already qualified for this summer's Olympics in Brazil, are in Florida training for a pair of exhibition games against Colombia.

MARINERS: Success hinges on revamped bullpen

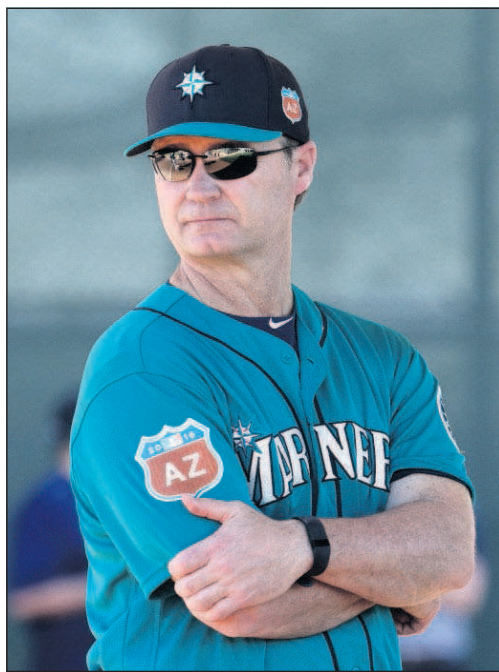
Continued from 1B

good bullpen," Servais said. "Those guys are going to be key for us."

Here's what else to watch with the 2016 Mariners:

KING OF THE NORTH (WEST): Hernandez is now entering his second decade pitching for the Mariners, which is shocking in itself. He is coming off a 2015 season where he won 18 games, second-most of his career, but saw his ERA rise to 3.53, the highest since posting a 3.92 ERA in 2007. Hernandez also had some of the more forgettable outings of his career last season, including giving up 10 earned runs in 2 1/3 innings in Boston and managing just one out and giving up eight earned runs in Houston.

Hernandez remains the ace of Seattle's staff that includes the return of Hisashi Iwakuma, promising youngster Taijuan Walker and



In this Feb. 20, 2016, file photo, Seattle Mariners manager Scott Servais watches a drill during spring training baseball practice, in Peoria, Ariz.

AP Photo/Charlie Riedel

the additions of Miley and Karns.

CANO SHOW: If spring training is an indication, Cano is on the verge of a big season. Cano struggled the first half of the 2015 season and played through two

sports hernias the second half of the year. He finished with respectable numbers at the plate, but Seattle did not pay \$250 million over 10 years for Cano to hit .287 and play average second base in the prime of his career.

BULL(PEN) ON PARADE: The determining factor in Seattle's success will likely be a revamped bullpen. Seattle is hoping that Steve Cishek can rebound from a down 2015 and return to the closer form he showed in Miami. If Cishek can be solid in the ninth inning and Joaquin Benoit holds down the eighth, then Seattle has enough arms to bridge the latter innings. If either of them struggle, the Mariners could be vulnerable in the late innings.

DEFENSE FIRST: Part of Seattle's makeover was to play to the strengths of its home park. That led to the acquisitions of Martin and Aoki for the outfield and Miley and Karns for the rotation. Martin and Aoki will be asked to cover ground in Seattle's vast outfield, while Miley and Karns will likely enjoy pitching in the big stadium after playing last season in Boston and Tampa Bay.

BLAZERS: Lillard hits two free throws to ice game

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points. Jae Crowder returned to the court after missing the last eight games with a sprained ankle. He didn't miss a beat, sinking a big 3-pointer with 1:08 left to give the Celtics a one-point lead.

McCollum answered with a tough fadeaway jumper to reclaim a 110-109 lead with 1:04 remaining. Allan Crabb's steal on the next possession led to a dunk by Aminu with 49.2 seconds left. Boston couldn't catch up.

Portland trailed by as many as 12 in the third quarter, only to rally for a 13-point lead in the fourth. Celtics head coach Brad Stevens said that their early third quarter lead gave them a "false sense of security."

"It kept us feeling better than we were actually playing and they exposed us eventually," Stevens said.

Aminu was the Blazers' lifeline in the third, scoring 12 points and matching his career high of 20 points on a dunk, sparking Portland. Crabb's 3-pointer and a rebound basket by Ed Davis capped the Blazers' 10-0 run, tying the game at 81 and



Portland Trail Blazers guard C.J. McCollum, right, shoots over Boston Celtics guard Evan Turner, left, during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Portland, Ore., Thursday, March 31, 2016.

bringing the crowd to its feet.

With Lillard on the bench to start the fourth, the Blazers took over.

Lillard re-entered the game with 6:35 remaining and Portland's lead began to dwindle after Davis fouled out with four points, seven rebounds, three steals and two assists. The Celtics were able to close the gap to two with just over 3:25 to go.

With the crowd chanting "MVP," Lillard made two free throws to ice the win.

"A lot of the time, you see guys say, 'This was a

great team win' and this was really what that was," Lillard said. "They came out early and made it hard on me and CJ, coming off ball screens and handoffs. They basically said they were going to force everyone else to beat us and everybody showed up tonight."

The Blazers were lifeless early, going scoreless for the first three minutes. Lillard struggled in the first, scoring only six points, and going 0 for 3 from deep range. Portland was able to take the lead briefly off a 3-pointer from

Maurice Harkless with just over three minutes remaining in the first.

The Celtics' stellar defense, highlighted by a 7-0 run to start the second quarter, allowed them to build a 58-54 lead at the half. Thomas led all scorers with 13 points at the break.

DEFENSE MATTERS
Lillard was well off his average of 25.4 points a game, and credited Bradley with stellar defense. Against Bradley, Lillard has shot only 33 percent in the last seven games against the Celtics.

"I told him he's the best perimeter defender in the league," Lillard said about his brief chat with Bradley after the game. "Because he is."

TIP INS
Trail Blazers: Lillard had scored at least 20 points in the Blazers' last two meetings with the Celtics. ... The Blazers are still adjusting to the loss of Meyers Leonard, who will miss the remainder of the season after undergoing shoulder surgery.

UP NEXT
Trail Blazers: host Miami on Saturday.

Celtics: visit Golden State on Friday.

Athlete of the Week

Twenty questions with Alexis Morrison

East Oregonian

East Oregonian: Favorite sports team?

Alexis Morrison: New York Yankees

Favorite athlete?

(Former Buckaroo) ShaeLee Lindsey at Portland State

Favorite memory as a Buckaroo?

Winning the (2014) state title

Favorite movie?

Stuck in Love

Favorite actor?

Logan Lerman

Favorite TV show?

Supernatural

Favorite music genre?

Indie/Alternative

Favorite band?

The 1975

Favorite restaurant in Pendleton?

Great Pacific

Favorite fast food restaurant?

Chick Fil-A

Favorite candy bar?

Snickers

Coca-Cola or Pepsi?

Coke

Favorite family recipe?

My mom's tuna casserole

Favorite class in school?

Forensic science

Dream job?

Something in criminal justice or health sciences

Favorite vacation spot?

Boston

Favorite color?

Blue

How long have you played softball?

Since I was eight

Something people might not know about you?

I write left-handed, but everything in sports right-handed

Biggest influence on your life?

(Former Buckaroo) Darian Lindsey, the type of player she is, she motivated me to show that if she can do it, I can do it too.

ATHLETE
OF THE WEEK

ALEXIS MORRISON

Senior, Pendleton Softball

Alexis smacked a pair of solo home runs and added three doubles to help her Pendleton Buckaroos team go 3-1 during their spring break trip last week.

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