Parents worried about abuse in youth sports take charge

By SALLY HO
Associated Press

SEATTLE — With Olympic prodigies having just dazzled audiences worldwide, parents in the U.S. are reconciling the thrill of the gold with their fears from recent sexual abuse scandals in elite youth sports.

Shannon Stabbert said her 6-year-old daughter wants to be a gymnast, but the Seattle mother has decided to put her in a martial-arts program instead.

"I have no doubt she will be quite amazing at gymnastics," Stabbert said. "I just don't feel like it's a mentally, physically, emotionally healthy sport for girls."

High-profile cases of sexual abuse and other predatory behavior in gymnastics, swimming and other sports have jolted many parents who believe athletics can be an important part of their child's development. Some now feel compelled to be more cautious in monitoring their child's contact with coaches and other adults.

Experts say the spotty rules and certifications for coaches and glorification of sports culture can make children who feel pressure to achieve even more vulnerable. No longer a casual pastime, sports teams can leave kids as young as 5 in the care of undertrained, undersupervised coaches.

Emmett Gill, a professor at the University of Texas and expert on the personal development of student-athletes, said success often means children leave their communities to compete, which can leave them at more risk.

AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

In this Thursday, Feb. 15, photo, Lara Mae Chollette, a coach of youth soccer and basketball, poses for a photo with her daughter Linda, 10, left, and son Jaylen, 7, at a community gym in Seattle. Horrific cases and allegations of predatory crimes against youth in gymnastics, swimming and football, among other sports, have jolted many parents who say they believe sports can be an important part of their child's development. Some now feel compelled to take a more cautious approach in monitoring adult interactions, as advancement beyond pee-wee leagues become increasingly coach-driven.

"It's clear that the coach's responsibility, and their permanent goal, is to win, and that can sacrifice protecting vulnerable children," Gill said. "We really have forgotten about that good, old neighborhood team. Now youth sports is a bunch of strangers on teams with the best athletes, with the purpose of winning."

One national organization trying to prevent abuse of young athletes is the U.S. Center for SafeSport, a Denver-based nonprofit that formed last year.

It launched following the initial allegations of sexual abuse against Larry Nassar, the disgraced sports doctor for USA Gymnastics who will spend his life in prison after admitting he molested some of the nation's top gymnasts under the guise of medical treatment.

The U.S. Olympic Committee developed SafeSport, but it's now an independent organization that works with law enforcement to investigate abuse allegations for the 49 Olympic and Paralympic sports.

In addition to offering an online link for anonymous abuse reports, SafeSport also provides educational and training material for youth leagues nationwide. The goal is to prevent abuse altogether.

"We have got to get upstream and do more to educate athletes, to educate parents, to educate coaches and to educate sport administrators," SafeSport CEO Shellie Pfohl said. "I want every parent to know what questions they should be asking when they sign their child up."

Since its inception, SafeSport has received 470 reports of either emotional or physical abuse, including 165 reports this year and 222 active investigations overall. In some cases, the organization didn't have jurisdiction over a youth league to investigate an allegation.

Youth leagues outside Olympic and Paralympic sports don't have a national organization to investigate reports of physical abuse, harassment, hazing and other issues. Many of those leagues have spent years trying to mute overreaching parents through codes of conduct but now have to walk the line between input and child safety.

"There's a balance between appropriate parental involvement and engagement, meaning are there overzealous parents who may upset the team dynamic or be inappropriate in terms of their treatment of the coach or athletes, and balancing that with parental due diligence," Pfohl said. "We want parents to be empowered to not only ask these questions but to hold people accountable."

Gill, the expert on student-athlete development, urges all sports programs to create safety guidelines that clearly indicate the protocol for adults who suspect abuse. Though teachers and doctors must report it, coaches and volunteers do not.

"If we're really about youth development and character development, this is going to be in front — and the most important part — of our bylaws," Gill said.

Even the regulators are not immune. The chief safety officer of USA Swimming, Susan Woessner, announced last week that she was resigning after revealing she had kissed a coach accused of sexual abuse and later assisted in the governing body's investigation of him.

Sean Hutchison is under criminal investigation after Olympic swimmer Ariana Kukors said he abused her as a minor. Woessner said she wasn't in a relationship with Hutchison.

USA Swimming also issued a letter to parents saying it had failed members and its system was "not flawless" and vowing to "ensure that there is never a lapse of a support system again."

For many parents, they say they will look to set more boundaries and ask more questions.

"Sometimes you kind of wonder: Am I missing something as parent? Am I not looking? Am I not asking the right questions? Am I trusting too much?" said Lara Mae Chollette, a Seattle mother of three.

Chollette, who works in human resources, said she's also wondered lately whether parents should stay for lengthy practices. If someone else is watching her kids, she finds out the ages of the other siblings who may come along. Her husband also has made a rule against taking responsibility for another child for overnight trips.

As a coach herself of youth soccer and basketball, Chollette said she knows the schedules, other parents and how people come and go from the sports facilities, which is helpful.

"It's truly a commitment for us," Chollette said of attending every practice, game and trip. "We see it as an educational element for our kids. There are things in sports that a teacher can't teach. There are things in sports that life can't teach."

Associated Press writer Kurt Voigt contributed from Fayetteville, Arkansas.

Women's College Basketball

Oregon sophomore Ionescu named Pac-12 Player of the Year

By RYAN THORBURN
The Register-Guard

EUGENE (AP) — It took Sabrina Ionescu a long time to decide where to play college basketball.

Seven months after the other members of Oregon's touted 2016 recruiting class signed their letters of intent, the highest ranked prospect in program history stepped on campus just in time to join the Ducks.

It hasn't taken Ionescu long to live up to the hype. The sophomore guard was named the Pac-12 player of the year on Tuesday after helping lead the program to its first conference title in 18 years.

Ionescu is the third player in program history to be named Pac-12 player of the year by the coaches, joining Shaquala Williams (1999-2000) and Lauri Landerholm (1986-87).

"Sabrina sets the tone for us," Oregon coach Kelly Graves said in a release. "Her consistency, competitiveness and willingness to take the big shot are unmatched. She's the engine that makes us go."

The Ducks, who brought the Pac-12 championship hardware home after Sunday's clinching 74-61 victory at Arizona, need to clear space in the trophy case.

Ionescu and classmate Ruthy Hebard were named to the All-Pac-12 team the second consecutive season and are joined this year by junior Maite Cazorla. Satou Sabally is the freshman of the year.

Sabally, a versatile 6-foot-4 forward, averaged 10.9 points, 3.7 rebounds and 1.7 assists with 22 starts in 31 appearances.

Ionescu

Ionescu led the conference in scoring (19.2 ppg) and assists (7.8 apg) during the regular season. She also broke the NCAA career triple-double record while leading the Ducks to the Pac-12 championship.

Ionescu, who was ESPN's national freshman of the year last season, joins Washington's Kelsey Plum, Stanford's Chiney Ogwumike, and Stanford's Jayne Appel as players in the last 10 years to win both the league's freshman and player of the year honors.

Williams also won both for the Ducks, taking freshman of the year honors in 1998-99 before being named player of the year the following season. Ionescu is the conference's first sophomore to win player of the year since Stanford's Candice Wiggins did it in 2004-05.

Hebard averaged 18.0 points (fourth in the Pac-12) and 8.6 rebounds (fifth). She is also second nationally in field-goal percentage (47.9 percent) and set an NCAA record for consecutive field goals made (33).

Cazorla averaged 11.1 points, 5.1 assists and is regarded as the team's best defender. The point guard from Spain led the Ducks to the WNIT semifinals as a freshman and was an important part of the program's historic run to the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament last March.

Sabally led all freshmen in the conference in scoring and field-goal percentage (46.7 percent). She also made her first seven three-pointers during Oregon's key late-season win over preseason favorite UCLA.

Graves was beaten out for coach of the year honors by Stanford's Tara VanDerveer, even though the Ducks set a program record for overall (27) and conference (16) wins.

Oregon State senior center Marie Gulich was also on the All-Pac-12 team selected by the coaches, as well as the conference's all-defensive team.

The other All-Pac-12 selections on the 15-player list are California's Kristine Anigwe, UCLA's Jordin Canada and Monique Billings, Stanford's Brittany McPhee and Alanna Smith, Washington State's Borislava Hristova, Utah's Megan Huff, Arizona State's Kianna Ibis, Colorado's Kennedy Leonard, Washington's Amber Melgoza and USC's Kristen Simon.

Oregon will play either No. 8 Utah or No. 9 Colorado in a Pac-12 Tournament quarterfinal on Friday at KeyArena in Seattle (11:30 a.m., Pac-12 Networks).

MLB

Players Union files grievance Marlins, A's, Pirates and Rays

Associated Press

BRANDETON, Fla. — The Major League Baseball Players Association filed a grievance against the Miami Marlins, Oakland Athletics, Pittsburgh Pirates and Tampa Bay Rays, accusing the teams of failing to appropriately spend revenue-sharing money.

Union spokesman Chris Dahl, speaking Tuesday at the union's training camp for free agents, said the grievance was filed Friday. Union head Tony Clark declined to comment.

"We have received the complaint and believe it has no merit," Major League Baseball said in a statement.

If the case is not settled, it would proceed to a hearing before Mark Irvings, baseball's independent arbitrator. The grievance was first reported by the Tampa Bay Times.

Miami was 20th in payroll last year for its 40-man roster, according to MLB's final figures. Pittsburgh was 25th, Tampa Bay 27th and Oakland 28th.

Pittsburgh traded star outfielder Andrew McCutchen and ace Gerrit Cole during the offseason. Pirates President Frank Coonelly called the grievance "patently baseless" and said the team spent revenue-sharing money consistent with the rules in baseball's labor contract.

"Our revenue-sharing receipts have decreased for seven consecutive seasons while our major league payroll has more than doubled over this same period," Coonelly said in a statement. "Our revenue-sharing receipts are now just a fraction of what we spend on major league payroll. We also have made significant investments in scouting, signing amateur players, our player development system and our baseball facilities."

Baseball's collective bargaining agreement states "each club shall use its revenue-sharing receipts ... in an effort to improve its performance on the field" and prohibits use of that money to service debt related to franchise acquisition and service to debt not related to improving on-field performance.

The players' association expressed concern about the Marlins and the revenue-sharing provision a decade ago. While the Marlins denied any violations, the team, the union and the commissioner's oiffice announced in January 2010 an agreement covering three seasons.

The Marlins raised their 40-man payroll from $38 million in 2009 to $47 million in 2010 to $62 million in 2011 to $90 million in 2012, the year Marlins Park opened. Miami cut back to $42 million in 2013 but rose to $117 million last year. Miami has traded NL MVP Giancarlo Stanton, Marcell Ozuna, Dee Gordon and Christian Yelich since Bruce Sherman's ownership group bought the team in October.

Tampa Bay has traded Evan Longoria, Steven Souza Jr., Jake Odorizzi, Brad Boxberger and Corey Dickerson during the offseason.

"I think we're beyond what compliance is," Rays owner Stu Sternberg said. "We're very judicious in how we spend our money, but it's spent in a lot of forms and payroll is one of them."

Oakland will be disqualified from receiving revenue-sharing money starting with the offseason after the 2020 season, according to the collective-bargaining agreement, The A's issued a statement that said merely ""We support Major League Baseball's statement on the matter."

SCOREBOARD

Local slate

PREP BOYS BASKETBALL
Wednesday
Putnam at Pendleton (5A play-in), 6 p.m.
Thursday
Nixyaawii vs. Triad (1A quarterfinals, at Baker), 3:15 p.m.
Irrigon vs. De La Salle North Catholic (3A quarterfinals, at Coos Bay), 3:15 p.m.
Saturday
Hermiston vs. TBD (5A first round), TBD

PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL
Wednesday
Nixyaawii vs. Damascus Christian (1A quarterfinals, at Baker), 8:15 p.m.
Thursday
Heppner vs. Kennedy (2A Quarterfinals, at Pendleton HS), 1:30 p.m.
Friday
No. 9 Crescent Valley at No. 8 Pendleton (5A first round), TBD
No. 12 Hermiston at No. 5 Silverton (5A first round), TBD

MEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL
Wednesday
BMCC at CC's of Spokane, 8 p.m.

WOMEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL
Wednesday
BMCC at CC's of Spokane, 6 p.m.

Basketball

OSAA PLAYOFFS
Boys Class 2A Tournament
(at Pendleton)
Thursday's Games
No. 1 Western Mennonite vs. No. 8 Grant Union (at Convention Center), 1:30 p.m.
No. 4 Toledo vs. No. 5 Oakland (at Convention Center), 3:15 p.m.
No. 3 Knappa vs. No. 11 Vernonia (at Convention Center), 6:30 p.m.
No. 2 Columbia Christian vs. No. 10 Kennedy (at Convention Center), 8:15 p.m.
Girls Class 2A Tournament
(at Pendleton)
Thursday's Games
No. 1 Kennedy vs. No. 8 Heppner (at Pendleton HS), 1:30 p.m.
No. 4 Grant Union vs. No. 5 Faith Bible (at Pendleton HS), 3:15 p.m.
No. 3 Oakland vs. No. 6 St. Paul (at Pendleton HS), 6:30 p.m.
No. 2 Monroe vs. No. 7 Gold Beach (at Pendleton HS), 8:15 p.m.

NBA
EASTERN CONFERENCE
Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	42	17	.712	—
Boston	43	19	.694	½
Philadelphia	32	27	.542	10
New York	24	38	.387	19½
Brooklyn	20	42	.323	23½

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Washington	36	25	.590	—
Miami	32	29	.525	4
Charlotte	28	33	.459	8
Orlando	18	42	.300	17½
Atlanta	18	43	.295	18

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	36	24	.600	—
Indiana	34	26	.567	2
Milwaukee	33	27	.550	3
Detroit	28	32	.467	8
Chicago	20	41	.328	16½

WESTERN CONFERENCE
Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	47	13	.783	—
San Antonio	36	25	.590	11½
New Orleans	34	26	.567	13
Dallas	19	42	.311	28½
Memphis	18	41	.305	28½

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	38	26	.594	—
Portland	35	26	.574	1½
Oklahoma City	35	27	.565	2
Denver	33	28	.541	3½
Utah	31	30	.508	5½

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Golden State	47	14	.770	—
L.A. Clippers	32	27	.542	14
L.A. Lakers	26	34	.433	20½
Sacramento	18	43	.295	29
Phoenix	18	44	.290	29½

Tuesday's Games
Charlotte 118, Chicago 103
Cleveland 129, Brooklyn 123
Miami 102, Philadelphia 101
Washington 107, Milwaukee 104
Portland 116, Sacramento 99
L.A. Clippers 122, Denver 120
Wednesday's Games
Milwaukee at Detroit, 4 p.m.
Toronto at Orlando, 4 p.m.
Charlotte at Boston, 4:30 p.m.
Indiana at Atlanta, 4:30 p.m.
Golden State at Washington, 5 p.m.
Phoenix at Memphis, 5 p.m.
New Orleans at San Antonio, 5:30 p.m.
Oklahoma City at Dallas, 5:30 p.m.
Houston at L.A. Clippers, 7:30 p.m.

NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL
Top 25 Schedule
Tuesday's Games
No. 16 Tennessee 76, Mississippi St 54
Saint Joe's 78, No. 17 Rhode Island 48
Miami 91, No. 9 North Carolina 88
Arkansa 91, No. 14 Auburn 82
Wednesday's Games
Providence at No. 3 Xavier, 3:30 p.m. (FS1)
Ole Miss at No. 23 Kentucky, 4 p.m. (ESPN2)
No. 4 Villanoca at Seton Hall, 5:30 p.m. (FS1)
Flordia State at No. 18 Clemson, 6 p.m. (ESPNU)
No. 15 Houston at SMU, 6 p.m. (ESPN2)
No. 21 Nevada at UNLV, 8 p.m. (CBSSN)

Pac-12 Schedule
Tuesday's Games
No games scheduled.
Wednesday's Games
No games scheduled.
Thursday's Games
Oregon at Washington St, 6 p.m. (ESPN2)
Cal at Arizona St, 6 p.m. (ESPNU)
Stanford at No. 19 Arizona, 7 p.m. (FS1)
Oregon St at Washington, 8 p.m. (ESPN2)

NCAA WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
Top 25 Schedule
Tuesday's Games
No. 7 Texas 79, Oklahoma 66
Wednesday's Game
Murray State at No. 22 Belmont, 11 a.m.

Pac-12 Tournament
Thursday's Games
No. 8 Utah vs. No. 9 Colorado, 11:30 a.m. (PAC-12)
No. 5 Cal vs. No. 12 Washington, 2 p.m. (PAC-12)
No. 7 USC vs. No. 10 Washington St., 6 p.m. (PAC-12)
No. 6 Arizona St. vs. No. 11 Arizona, 8:30 p.m. (PAC-12)
Friday's Games
No. 1 Oregon vs. Colorado/Utah winner, 11:30 a.m.
No. 2 Stanford vs. WSU/USC winner, 6 p.m.
No. 3 Oregon St vs. Arizona/Arizona St winner, 8:30 p.m.
No. 4 UCLA vs. Cal/Washington winner, 2 p.m.
Saturday
Semifinal games, 6/8:30 p.m. (PAC-12)
Sunday
Championship game, 6 p.m. (ESPN2)

Hockey

NHL
EASTERN CONFERENCE
Atlantic Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Tampa Bay	63	43	17	3	89	227	170
Toronto	66	39	20	7	85	218	185
Boston	61	38	15	8	84	199	153
Florida	60	29	25	6	64	178	195
Detroit	62	26	26	10	62	165	183
Montreal	62	23	29	10	56	157	194
Ottawa	62	21	31	10	52	168	219
Buffalo	63	19	33	11	49	151	206

Metropolitan Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	64	36	21	7	79	198	191
Philadelphia	63	34	19	10	78	189	178
Pittsburgh	64	36	24	4	76	208	190
New Jersey	63	33	22	8	74	188	190
Columbus	63	32	26	5	69	168	175
N.Y. Islanders	63	29	27	7	65	207	225
Carolina	63	27	25	11	65	167	193
N.Y. Rangers	63	27	30	6	60	177	201

WESTERN CONFERENCE
Central Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Nashville	62	39	14	9	87	202	160
Winnipeg	63	37	17	9	83	213	170
Minnesota	63	36	20	7	79	196	177
Dallas	63	36	23	4	76	186	164
St. Louis	64	34	26	4	72	176	172
Colorado	62	33	24	5	71	190	186
Chicago	63	27	28	8	62	178	179

Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	62	41	16	5	87	217	169
San Jose	64	34	21	9	77	187	178
Anaheim	64	31	21	12	74	176	178
Los Angeles	63	34	24	5	73	180	157
Calgary	64	32	23	9	73	182	187
Edmonton	63	27	32	4	58	179	209
Vancouver	63	24	32	7	55	168	204
Arizona	62	18	34	10	46	148	205

NOTE: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss.

Tuesday's Games
Washington 3, Ottawa 2
New Jersey 3, Pittsburgh 2
Boston 4, Carolina 3, OT
Florida 3, Toronto 2, OT
Nashville 6, Winnipeg 5
Minnesota 8, St. Louis 3
Dallas 2, Calgary 0
San Jose 5, Edmonton 2
Los Angeles 4, Vegas 1
Wednesday's Games
Buffalo at Tampa Bay, 4 p.m.
N.Y. Islanders at Montreal, 4 p.m.
Detroit at St. Louis, 5 p.m.
Calgary at Colorado, 6:30 p.m.
N.Y. Rangers at Vancouver, 7 p.m.