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Former Analy wrestler files sex harass suit Woman says ex-coach asked her to strip for weigh-in and share his bed on overnight trip

By Kerry Benefield

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A former Analy High School wrestler has filed a lawsuit claiming she was sexually harassed by her head coach.

The lawsuit, filed in Sonoma County Superior Court Monday, alleges that former head Shawn Cook asked Dominique Blanc-Brodie to strip naked for a weigh-in last year and on two occasions -- including one that occurred during a school-sponsored tournament -- insisted she sleep in the same bed with him.

The suit names West Sonoma County Union High School District, superintendent Keller McDonald and Cook as defendants.

The plaintiff, who graduated from Analy last spring and is now 18, was a minor at the time of the alleged incidents. She was on the wrestling team for three years.

A monthslong criminal investigation into "potentially criminal and certainly inappropriate conduct involving a juvenile female" was conducted by the Sebastopol Police Department was forwarded to the District Attorney's office Tuesday, according to Sebastopol Police Chief Jeff Weaver.

Cook, who was not rehired to coach at Analy this season, did not return calls Tuesday.

Analy Principal Martin Webb referred inquiries to a contact at the Redwood Empire Schools Insurance Group, whose point person declined to comment on pending litigation.

Robert Henry, the district's attorney, was out of state Tuesday and unavailable for comment.

The 16-page complaint claims the girl was subjected to a hostile environment in which she was often the only girl competing. She claims coaches refused to take her to all-girls tournaments, whereas male wrestlers attended multiple tournaments each season.

"I could only realize how blatantly unfair the situation was until I was removed from it," Blanc-Brodie said in an interview last week.

High school wrestling is still largely a male-dominated sport. Although all-girls tournaments have been held locally in the past, no such high school competitions are scheduled in either Sonoma or Marin counties this season, according to the Redwood Empire Wrestling Officials and Coaches Association.

The criminal investigation probed allegations that Cook asked the teen-ager to enter a closet with him and strip naked for a weigh-in, the police chief said. Also under investigation are the girl's claims that at a wrestling tournament in Newark in February of last year she was forced to share a hotel room with three adult, male coaches while male members of the boys team slept in a separate room.

On at least one night of the two-night stay, Cook insisted Blanc-Brodie share a bed with him while the two other coaches shared the second bed, according to the suit.

One of the two assistant coaches in the room, Ryan Stevens, is now head wrestling coach at Analy.

On another occasion, Blanc-Brodie alleges that after a fight with her mother, Cook picked her up and drove her to his apartment. The two shared a bed with the plaintiff fully clothed, according to the suit.

"We are here to say that the school needs to take responsibility for training all the people who are going to have kids under their guidance, especially on overnight trips, about what is proper and what is not proper," said the young women's attorney, Jody LeWitter of Oakland. "I think bells should go off when a coach wants a kid to get in bed with him."

Blanc-Brodie said she told her mother of the alleged sexual behavior at the end of February or early March, but urged her not to report it because she feared repercussions, the suit states. But sometime in or around April, according to the suit, her mother contacted Webb and Analy vice principal Brenda Hoff.

Analy officials then alerted police, according to the suit.

Cook, who was not a teacher at Analy, was not rehired as wrestling coach this season in part because Stevens applied for the job, according to McDonald. As a credentialed instructor on campus, Stevens was allowed to interview for the position.

The coaching change was made prior to the complaint being filed, McDonald said.

The suit seeks an unspecified amount of money for pain, suffering, mental injury and emotional distress, as well as for equal competitive opportunities for female wrestlers and "appropriate training and supervision of school staff" and "appropriate hiring, screening, and selection procedures for coaches."

"I'm sure this is not an individual case," Blanc-Brodie said. "This is not about me."

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