

USA Olympic Diving Head Coach Accused of Covering Up the Sexual Abuse of Female Divers.

Two more USA Diving members file class action lawsuit (Case 1:18-cv-03015-WTL-TAB) naming USA Diving Olympic coach John Wingfield as an enabler of coaching sexual abuse.

Denver, CO -- October 2, 2018 -- Two USA Diving members have filed another federal class action sexual abuse lawsuit against USA Diving and the coach of the 2008 USA Olympic Diving team, John Wingfield. The two victims allege that starting in early 2016, Wingfield and his club RipFest, had received numerous complaints that coach Johel Ramirez Suarez was, according to the lawsuit, routinely sexually exploiting, assaulting, and raping multiple female athletes that were entrusted into the protection of USA Diving, Indiana Diving Association, Wingfield and his diving club RipFest.

As a result of ignoring complaints against Suarez, Jane Doe, fearful of retaliation by USA Diving, claims in the lawsuit that she was sexually assaulted by Suarez several months later in the fall of 2016. Jane Doe was living in the RipFest dorms in Arcadia, Indiana from July 2016 to June 2017. While sleeping in her room in the RipFest dorms in the fall of 2016, she claims to awoke to Defendant Suarez attempting to digitally penetrate her. Jane Doe was able to fight Suarez off of her. The next day, Jane Doe told Wingfield that Suarez had assaulted her in the RipFest dorms.

From late 2016 to his arrest in late 2017, it was an open secret that Suarez was having sexual intercourse with another diver, who was then between the ages of 16 and 18.

In response to athlete complaints against Suarez, Wingfield allegedly told his athletes that Suarez was Venezuelan, and “that is just how they are.”

In the fall of 2015, prior to the alleged sexual abuse of Jane Doe, the lawsuit claims that Suarez enticed, recruited, or otherwise induced then 16-year-old Jane Doe 2 to move from another state to join the program at RipFest. By the end of 2015, Suarez was sexually assaulting Jane Doe 2.

Suarez pled guilty to the sexual abuse of another teenage RipFest diver when he was arrested in Hamilton County, Indiana in November 2017 and charged with 32 felony counts of child sexual abuse (*State of Indiana v. Ramirez Suarez*, 29C01-1711-F5-008587). As a result, SafeSport placed Suarez on the USA Diving banned list on January 16, 2018, two months after his criminal arrest.

The lawsuit states that despite having actual knowledge of the need to do so, USA Diving failed to adopt any policies, rules, or procedures to keep athletes safe from sexual abuse. “The complaint charges the USOC along with their NGB, USA Diving, obstructing, or covering up complaints of sexual abuse, deferring and diverting

investigations, and suppressing all questions about sexual exploitation by its coaches,” said Attorney Robert Allard.

USA Diving is the national governing body for the sport of diving, and, as such, is a member of the USOC. There is only one route to the Olympics. You must be selected by USA Diving and named to the US Olympic diving team. USA Diving selects divers to compete in the Olympic Games, World Championships, and other competitions. In order for a diver to participate in USA Diving-sanctioned events, it is necessary to be a USA Diving member.

“This power structure creates a monopoly-like situation that exposes young, vulnerable, athletes to a very dangerous dynamic in which they are forced to do anything their coaches say,” said Attorney Jon Little.

Earlier this year, Olympic hopeful diver Estee Pryor along with two other divers filed a similar lawsuit (Case No. 1:18-cv-2113-WTL-MJD) against the USOC and USA Diving as a result of alleged sexual abuse by USA Diving-certified coach Will Bohonhyi.

Jane Doe 2 is expected to appear on Wednesday, October 3, 2018 before a Senate subcommittee.

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Note: Until Jane Doe 2 (AS) appears on Wednesday, please DO NOT name her in your story. I do realize her name is in the lawsuit. Just follow your policies on the naming of sexual abuse victims.

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