

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fort Wayne Senate

FROM: Executive Committee

DATE: March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: Consideration and Implementation of the Recommendations by the Ad Hoc Committee to Examine the Procedural Handling of Allegations of Misconduct in the PFW Women's Basketball Program

Whereas, the Ad Hoc Committee to Examine the Procedural Handling of Allegations of Misconduct in the PFW Women's Basketball Program completed its yearlong investigation and submitted its final report to the Senate Executive Committee (see Senate Reference No. 21-42),

Whereas, the Ad Hoc Committee identified a number of concerns and areas for improvement, and made a list of recommendations,

Whereas, since the committee was created to look at the allegations of misconduct in the PFW Women's Basketball Program, there was at least one more instance of PFW athletic coach accused of improper behavior (see attachment),

BE IT RESOLVED, that the University Administration provides a report to the Senate in the Fall of 2022 on the steps it plans to take to address the concerns and suggestions in the Ad Hoc Report.

Purdue-Fort Wayne volleyball coach gone as more players come forward alleging sexual abuse

Dana Hunsinger Benbow, Indianapolis Star

Wed, December 22, 2021, 10:42 AM·4 min read

Six more players have come forward with allegations of physical, emotional and sexual abuse against former volleyball coach Alexis Meeks-Rydell, including a player saying Meeks-Rydell forced her to cuddle in hotel beds on trips to away games.

Meeks-Rydell was hired as assistant women's volleyball coach at Purdue-Fort Wayne in June. Three months later, a federal lawsuit was filed by two former players -- Rachael DeMarcus and Alexis Silver -- at the University of South Alabama, where Meeks-Rydell was head coach.

The suit alleged Meeks-Rydell, a former IUPUI volleyball standout, was physically and emotionally abusing, sexually harassing and inappropriately touching them.

On Friday, an amended lawsuit was filed in Alabama with six more players coming forward.

Purdue-Fort Wayne no longer lists Meek-Rydell as an assistant coach on its roster and her bio has been removed from the school's website.

"Meeks-Rydell is no longer an assistant coach at Purdue-Fort Wayne," assistant athletic director for media services Derrick Sloboda wrote in an e-mail to IndyStar on Tuesday when asked of Meeks-Rydell's status.

He declined to say why she is no longer employed there "due to it being a personnel matter."

Meeks-Rydell, who is from Leo, Indiana, was hired as the assistant coach at Purdue-Fort Wayne June 1. She spent the previous two seasons as head coach at Division I South Alabama. She resigned from the school in February, according to the lawsuit.

The amended lawsuit filed Friday lists four additional former players at South Alabama -- Caitlin Tipping, Meaghan Jones, Hannah Kazee, Hannah Johnson, and two unnamed individuals.

The complaint alleges that Meeks-Rydell physically and sexually abused her players, forcing one to "cuddle" with her in hotel room beds during team road trips, pinching players' buttocks as they exited the team bus and forcing them to engage in "floor hugs" in which team members laid on the ground while Meeks-Rydell laid on top of them.

Players say the abuse turned physical. On at least one occasion, Meeks-Rydell slapped DeMarcus across the face, the lawsuit alleges.

"The abusive behavior continued, unchecked, in 2019 and 2020, with the direct knowledge of leaders and university officials whom either could have, or should have, reported or stopped the abuse but failed to do so," the complaint alleges.

The lawsuit alleges Meeks-Rydell created a climate of fear and intimidation among the team. She regularly over-trained players and coerced them to practice or play while injured, in violation of NCAA bylaws, the suit alleges.

Meeks-Rydell often would verbally abuse injured players, ridiculing and accusing them of faking injuries and forcing them to play through serious medical conditions, including concussions and asthma attacks, as well as ankle and knee injuries, the lawsuit alleges.

"Alexis Meeks-Rydell, the University of South Alabama, and the other defendants had a duty to ensure the safety of its student-athletes," Diandra "Fu" Debrosse Zimmermann, attorney for the plaintiffs and a partner at DiCello Levitt Gutzler, said in a statement. "Not only did they fail to do that, but they also actively conspired to cover up a situation that they knew was detrimental to these young women."