

Knight may sue Indiana U. Bean, Nyad: gay athletes face big hurdles

TMS Campus
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Bobby Knight's lawyer sent a letter to Indiana University last week that effectively notified the basketball coach's former employer of Knight's intention to file suit.

While Knight's lawyer hopes to settle the matter out of court, it was necessary to notify the university of his intent within 180 days of Knight's Sept. 10 firing in order to retain the right to sue.

"If the university doesn't negotiate with us, we have no choice but to sue," Knight's attorney, Russell Yates wrote.

The letter accuses the university of libel, slander, inflicting emotional distress and interfering with Knight's subsequent job search. Knight's contract with the IU contained a "covenant not to compete," which states that Knight needed to wait eight years before

he could take a coaching position in Kentucky, Indiana or at any of the other Big Ten schools. If he were to break the covenant, he would forfeit deferred compensation owed to him by the university, estimated at \$4.5 million.

The university has called Knight's accusations frivolous and unfounded.

Knight wouldn't need to break his covenant if he were to take a coaching position at Texas Tech University, where the administration has expressed an interest in Knight following the dismissal of coach James Dickey. Texas Tech is a member of the Big 12 conference.

Indiana University president Myles Brand fired Knight Sept. 10 after months of "unacceptable behavior," the most recent example taking place when the legendary coach grabbed a freshman by the arm after the student said, "What's up, Knight?"

by Madeline Bars Diaz
Knight-Ridder Tribune
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MIAMI BEACH, Fla. - Former major-leaguer Billy Bean spent his six-year career pretending that he was straight and hiding his partner from even his closest teammates.

"It's kind of the ultimate don't ask-don't tell environment," Bean said at a discussion on gay athletes, held at the Eden Roc Resort & Spa in Miami Beach on Monday night.

Bean and Diana Nyad, a long-distance-swimmer-turned-sports broadcaster, were the panelists for "Breaking the Silence: Gays and Lesbians in Professional Sports," a discussion presented by The New York Times and co-sponsored by the Dade Human Rights Foundation.

Bean, who played for Detroit, Los Angeles and San Diego as an outfielder and lives in Miami Beach, said professional athletes could lose millions of dollars if they were to reveal they were gay.

When Bean hit his first home run in the major leagues it was the "happiest moment of my life," he said.

That moment was soured when some teammates unexpectedly showed up at the home he shared with his partner. They brought beer and wanted to celebrate Bean's accomplishment. His partner ended up spending three hours in his car until the teammates left.

"You know you're never going to be accepted," Bean said.

"You're not acceptable. You're less than the other guys and you hurt the people you love the most just to get by."

Bean, who played major league ball from 1987 through 1995, came out of the closet in a 1999 newspaper article.

His revelation sparked interest from other media outlets. Robert Lipsyte, who wrote a front-page story on Bean for The New York Times, was the moderator for Monday's discussion.

He pointed out how only a handful of athletes such as Martina Navratilova and Greg Louganis are openly gay, and Navratilova is perhaps the only one who has had big-name sponsors since coming out.

"What we're finding is it's one area that sports fans don't want to deal with," Lipsyte said.

In response to a comment Lipsyte made about sports defining femininity and masculinity, Nyad told the audience of 50 or so people about the childhood abuse she endured.

Nyad, who grew up in Fort Lauderdale and set a record in 1979 when she swam 102.5 miles from Bimini to Miami, recalled how swimming was her shelter from sexual abuse and a refuge from men she feared.

She said sexual abuse ties into the issue of why sports was welcoming to her and some others.

"It does fold into the issue of gay women in sports and why they feel comfortable there, partly because that is the place where they can deny their femininity that has been dangerous to them," Nyad said.

Gordon atop Sporting News driver poll

The Sporting News
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Ranking/Driver/TSN Points/
Winston Cup Points

1. Jeff Gordon/469/613.
2. Dale Jarrett/382/576.
3. Kevin Harvick/330/443.
4. Sterling Marlin/324/531.
5. Michael Waltrip/315/509.
6. Johnny Benson/314/540.
7. Rusty Wallace/284/472.
8. Steve Park/280/435.
9. Bill Elliott/264/495.
10. Ricky Rudd/258/467.

Through race No. 4, at
Atlanta.

Sheffield apologizes during meeting

by Jason Reid
Los Angeles Times
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VERO BEACH, Fla. - A contrite Gary Sheffield apologized to teammates, coaches and Manager Jim Tracy in a closed-door meeting Tuesday at Dodgertown.

Sheffield acknowledged in the 30-minute session that his contract-extension demand, trade request and criticism of Chairman Bob Daly had made for a major distraction.

Players said the six-time all-star spoke from the heart while asking for forgiveness, conceding that he'd exercised poor judgment.

Sheffield reaffirmed his commitment to the club and answered questions from teammates, who had to be convinced that the mercurial left fielder still wanted to be a Dodger and would not disappoint again.

"It was just one of those things that needed to be done," Sheffield said of the meeting. "These guys know I'm an emotional guy. I just wanted to speak from the heart, just lay it out on the line, and let them know I know we're trying to win a championship here, and I want to be part of that. ...

"You have to respect this game, you have to respect your teammates,

"He was man enough, and willing, to stand up and say, 'Look, I was wrong,' and he apologized to the people he had to apologize to."

- Dodger pitcher Kevin Brown

and I do. I'm going to let it show instead of talking about it. I'm going to be a doer, not a talker."

That was good enough for Sheffield's teammates, who praised Sheffield for his handling of the situation.

"Everyone in this room felt comfortable with what was said, and as long as everyone in here is a man of his word - and I mean everyone - there won't be any issues," first baseman Eric Karros said. "He assured us all his focus is going to be on baseball and on the field, and you have to take him on his word."

Said pitcher Kevin Brown, a strong supporter of Sheffield: "He was man enough, and willing, to stand up and say, 'Look, I was wrong,' and he apologized to the people he had to apologize to."

"I give him all the credit in the world. Instead of continuing to push

and try to save face, or whatever, and refuse to admit he was wrong, he stepped back when he was presented with some facts."

Management wasn't all that sure.

Derrick Hall, senior vice president, said the Dodgers would still consider their options; General Manager Kevin Malone still is accepting trade offers, and Daly plans to monitor Sheffield's actions and words.

"Bob Daly has said all along he only wants players who want to be Dodgers," Hall said. "If it takes time to determine if an individual wants to be here, so be it."

Monday, Sheffield fired his original agent, Jim Neader, hired the influential Scott Boras and apologized to Daly and fans.

"I've got to go back to doing what I do best, just playing baseball," Sheffield said. "Anything outside this clubhouse, and on the field, I'm leaving that to Scott. I'm going to go out and put up numbers. He's going to do all the talking for me, and I'm going to do all the playing."

Some suggestions to fix 'Monday Night Football'

by Fritz Quindt
The Sporting News
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Can Monday Night Football get its groove back? Don Ohlmeyer is out after one year as producer, claiming chronic jet lag but no regrets. Yeah, he took over with the worst ratings in series history, proceeded to change everything but the color of Al Michaels' holy toenails, and what happened? The Nielsen's fell 7 percent.

Last year I e-mailed ABC Sports czar Howard Katz one serious, unsolicited suggestion: Replace Boomer Esiason with a big-name guest-star analyst - Oprah Winfrey, Harrison Ford, Fred Durst, Garo Yepremian, maybe Ohlmeyer's bud Norm MacDonald - each week! Either Katz's server was down, or he can't read, because my can't-miss concept got the Frank Gifford treatment.

ABC already has announced the cast will return this year, but the field is otherwise clear. So, this time I'm submitting multiple-choice ideas (none involving the resurrection of Howard Cosell with costly production techniques like The Sopranos used on Nancy Marchand). ABC has already named Fred

Gaudelli, producer of ESPN's Sunday Night Football to take that position for Monday night. Now, for other changes: Pencils ready?

To gain maximum viewership, ABC could:

- a) move kickoffs to 8 p.m. Eastern Time.
- b) move kickoffs to 8 p.m. Bangladesh Time.
- c) move Monday Night Football to Sunday afternoons.
- d) move halftimes to ESPN2.

Hank Williams Jr., who has sung the opening since the Harding Administration, should:

- a) change the lyric to "Not enough of my rowdy friends are here on Monday night."
- b) get "accidentally" grazed by the Roman candles going off around him and retire gracefully, on disability.
- c) have to defend his position each week against a worthy challenger. First contender: John Tesh.
- d) simply be replaced by the more melodic Gilligan's Island theme.

Expand Melissa Stark's role to include:

- a) more than one question during on-field interviews.
- b) her own line of clothes at Kmart.
- c) a bake-off with Eric Dickerson.

d) Missy-cam.

Dennis Miller must:

- a) NOT analyze every play; that's Dan Fouts' turf.
- b) resign for the good of the republic.
- c) at least explain what CondD-sur-l'Escaut is.
- d) quit using a Flow-bee.

To ensure competitive, exciting games, ABC can:

- a) continue to keep the Ravens off the schedule.
- b) pre-screen contestants, a la Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?
- c) broker a Richard vs. Susan Survivor rematch.
- d) televise Madden/PlayStation's version of '79 Chargers vs. '99 Rams.

Any MNF producer should remember:

- a) the game is the thing, not the show.
- b) the show is the thing, not the game.
- c) nobody watches TV anymore; they're watching the Internet.
- d) this ship never sank on Roone Arledge's watch.

Tryon tries on golfing greatness at an early age

by Peter Yoou
Los Angeles Times
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Ty Tryon played 18 holes of golf Tuesday and wasn't asked for an autograph.

He played among peers: high school players who are at most a couple of years older. He got thirsty during the round and couldn't find a water cooler.

It was much closer to the reality he's accustomed to.

The week before was a fantasy, a surreal week in Florida he's not sure really happened. Tryon, a 16-year-old high school sophomore, played in the PGA Tour's Honda Classic against Jesper Parnevik, John Daly, Tom Lehman and Phil Mickelson, among others.

A Monday qualifier for the Honda Classic, he played there in the spotlight. Galleries swelled to watch the phenom. Television cameras followed his every move. Autograph seekers hounded him after each round.

There were drinks on every tee. He was two strokes off the lead after an opening round of 5-under-par 67. He became the second-youngest player in tour history to make a cut after a 73 in the second round. He shot 68 Sunday and finished tied for 39th, eight strokes behind winner Parnevik.

Tuesday, he played with his high school team, Lake Highland Prep of Orlando, Fla., in a match against Santa Margarita and La

Costa Canyon.

He played at Coto de Caza Golf and Racquet Club, a secluded private course in a gated Orange County community about 60 miles south of Los Angeles. The galleries swelled to about a dozen.

"It was different," Tryon said.

"It was hard getting up for this match, but it was nice to be out there just to have fun. To tell you the truth, I'm kind of sick of golf."

Tryon shot a 1-over 73 Tuesday and his team, considered the best in Florida, finished two strokes behind Santa Margarita, the reigning Southern California champion. Tryon was second to Scott Manley of Santa Margarita by two strokes in the individual race.

That's right, 39th over the weekend in a field of 144 of the world's best; then two days later second in a field of 18 high school players.

"I was mentally pretty dead out there," Tryon said. "I had a tough time concentrating."

It's not abnormal for Tryon to finish second in high school matches. Tryon, ranked No. 5 in the nation among boys, is not even the top player on his team. That honor belongs to Christo Greyling, ranked No. 1 in the nation.

Before last weekend, Tryon wasn't the most famous player on his team, either. Jason Cook, son of PGA Tour veteran John Cook, is a freshman. Andy Leadbetter,

son of noted golf instructor David Leadbetter, is also on the team.

John Cook, who is an assistant coach for Lake Highland Prep, said this trip couldn't have come at a better time for Tryon.

"(The Honda Classic) got a little overwhelming for him at points," said Cook, a 10-time PGA Tour winner. "He needs to enjoy this time and be a kid. He put all his effort into those four days and he's feeling that. It's tough for a 16-year-old."

The day after the Honda Classic, Tryon boarded a plane for Los Angeles for a long-planned trip to play against some of the top teams in Southern California. The trip is a quick escape from the spotlight for Tryon and a quick return to reality.

If Tryon is having any doubts about that, his teammates are sure to keep him in check.

"These kids will make sure he doesn't get too big of a head," Cook said. "They'll be all over him. All these guys are just kids and Ty is still one of them."

Tryon doesn't plan to let go of that. He said his success last week isn't going to tempt him to prematurely turn professional, though he hasn't ruled out skipping college.

"I've got the whole amateur thing to do," Tryon said. "I've got the next three years of amateur golf before I think about (turning pro)."

Some say he could be ready sooner than that. Taylor Wood,

who plays for Santa Margarita and is ranked No. 47 in the nation, was paired with Tryon Tuesday.

"He's pretty solid," Wood said. "He's comfortable out there. That's the big thing is you have to be comfortable. I think he could turn pro in a year."

Cook was more impressed with Tryon's performance at the Honda Classic, where Tryon beat Cook by a stroke.

"He's more than just a good junior player," Cook said. "His success didn't surprise me because he's a good player, period. It's a lot different now than when I was a kid."

Tryon spent about an hour each day with the media last week and spent another two hours signing autographs.

"That was really weird," he said. "I signed every one, but it was weird. Usually, I'm the one trying to get an autograph."

The best part of the experience?

"Beating coach (Cook) was kind of cool," Tryon said.

Tuesday, Cook got revenge. The coach made seven birdies in 11

holes before quitting play to watch the end of the match. He could have bogeyed the rest of the holes and still would have beaten Tryon

by a stroke.

Welcome back to reality, Ty.



LOS ANGELES TIMES PHOTO BY RICHARD HARTOG

Ty Tryon, the 16-year-old who made headlines over the weekend when he became the second youngest player to make the cut in a PGA Tour event, lines up a shot during a prep match at the Coto de Caza Golf Club.