

PISTONS

Sexual harassment lawsuit involving Pistons exec and his executive assistant settles



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A year after his firing over a sexual harassment scandal, embattled Detroit Pistons executive Rob Murphy and the team have settled a contentious lawsuit with his accuser: DeJanai Raska, a former executive assistant to the powerful basketball figure who accused her boss of sexually taunting her for months.

According to lawyers for both sides, 33-year-old Raska has reached a confidential settlement with the Pistons and 51-year-old Murphy, one year after suing both in Wayne County Circuit Court, alleging the Piston's former assistant general manager used his position to turn her into his sexual target. Among her allegations:

She said he groped her private parts in front of her 4-year-old daughter, grabbed her buttocks multiple times, subjected her to unwanted kissing, often told her she aroused him and said he wanted to "put a baby in her."

"This case is a reminder that everyone has a right to work free of sexual harassment," Raska's attorney, Megan Bonanni, said in a statement Tuesday. "DeJanai's story is familiar to countless women who have endured harassment at work and feared the consequences of speaking up. You are protected under the law."

Attorney Danielle Canepa, who also worked on the case, added: "We are happy for our client to close this difficult chapter and move forward in her life."

Murphy's lawyer, Steve Potter, said the settlement is part of a broader, global settlement that resolved multiple claims by both Raska and Murphy, who sued his accuser for alleged defamation over her media interviews involving her claims. The settlement also resolved claims that Murphy made against the Pistons over his firing.

"Rob Murphy is very happy with the settlement," said Potter, who has long maintained that his client was cleared of sexual harassment by the Pistons.

"My client's long and challenging road to closure was traveled carefully and thoroughly," Potter said in a statement Tuesday. "We are thankful to share that all parties involved have closed this matter with all parties exempt from liability. Each intends to move forward separately in a productive manner."

Potter added:

"Mr. Murphy wishes to thank his family and friends who stood by him throughout this entire ordeal. Mr. Murphy has moved forward to continue to make a positive impact on the lives of others as he has effectively accomplished over the past three decades."

As of late Tuesday afternoon, the Pistons had not responded for comment.

The settlement comes 18 months after Murphy was placed on leave from the Pistons as the organization quietly investigated claims that he had engaged in workplace misconduct with a former female employee.

Six months after placing him on leave, the Pistons formally announced Murphy's firing after the Free Press inquired about his job status.

"Rob Murphy no longer works for the Detroit Pistons or Motor City Cruise, in any capacity. Mr. Murphy was recently terminated for violation of company policy and the terms of his employment agreement," the statement reads. "The facts that gave rise to his termination surfaced during a review, assisted by a national law firm, of allegations made by a former employee."

Raska did not go public with her claims for many months, breaking her silence in an interview with the Free Press.

"It felt like I had a dangerous secret. I felt like if the wrong person found out, I could be fired," Raska said during the interview, stressing she lived with fear and anxiety for months, until she couldn't take it anymore.

"Silence is not an option," Raska said. "It's not for me. It shouldn't be for any woman. ... This is my chance to voice the truth ... and to take my power back."

Murphy has denied the allegations through his attorney, Potter, who last year told the Free Press that his client had been cleared of sexual harassment claims by the Pistons following an internal investigation.

My client has maintained his silence and patience since he was put on administrative leave by the Pistons in October 2022," Potter said in a statement last year. "Both my client and I want to express our support for all victims of sexual harassment or any form of workplace misconduct. We stand by everyone's right to seek justice. However, in light of recent unsubstantiated, publicly stated allegations, I can no longer advise my client to sit quietly and allow his reputation to be unfairly tarnished."

Raska's attorney, Bonanni, scoffed at the statement, saying: "Our client is telling the truth, it's as simple as that."

Murphy is locally renowned. A former basketball and football star at Detroit Mumford, he coached at Detroit Crockett and Central high schools before becoming an assistant coach in college, first at Kent State and then at Syracuse. He also was head coach at Eastern Michigan for 10 seasons (2011-21) and reached three postseasons.

In 2021, he was hired as president and general manager of the Motor City Cruise. That same year, the Detroit Pistons hired him as senior director of player personnel, and eventually promoted him to assistant general manager.

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