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PLEASE READ IF YOU CARE ABOUT MY SEXUAL HARASSMENT EXPERIENCE AND THE IGNORANCE OF THE CAL FOOTBALL STAFF:

Wheres the accountability in collegiate revenue sports? Oh wait, there is none.

By Paige Elizabeth Cornelius
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"I will get you fired if you do not have sex with me" - member of the Cal Football Coaching Staff. Let it be known that this was said on the field, in the red zone, during a practice.

I think there is a significant portion of the population that looks at football players as misogynists, and walking examples of the toxic masculinity epidemic in our society. But what comes as a surprise is that I am not here to talk about players, I want to talk about the coaches. Highly paid, famous, revered when their team wins a national championship. I am an athlete, and I have been my whole life, so when I got the opportunity to work for the UC Berkeley team, I was excited beyond belief. Night games under the lights, adrenaline rushes and team spirit.

..fast forward to March 2019, and I am medically withdrawn from school, seeking intensive therapy and psychiatry for the post traumatic stress syndrome and anxiety that happened from the time I spent working for the Cal Football team.

I can already hear people saying "its your fault", "you brought it upon yourself". Why? Because I am a tall, attractive blonde girl who sticks out in a sea of sweaty, hyper masculine men on a football field. My first day at work I was excited, I love being in an athletic atmosphere, and I had always been a huge Cal fan. 6:30 AM rolls up, and I am already on the field as the players start to come out. Maybe because I am a new face in the sports medicine squad, but maybe for other reasons, I was being stared at up and down, by coaches and payers alike. Hours after practice my Instagram begins to blow up, DM's with creepy messages, asking me to come over, inviting me to parties. I'm in college this is normal, or what has been normalized, and I expected to get this from the players.

What I did not expect was the ruthless, endless, and persistent sex harassment from the coaches. Practices are cold in the morning, so I was wearing black leggings. I turn around and three coaches are in a huddle staring at my butt. I did not know what to do, I was so embarrassed. I am a financial aid student, I am here to make money not to be some object to look at. To prove my worth, and that I was not just some object, I was coming in early and leaving late, and never missed a shift.

Here starts the issues that truly kept me up at night and made me dread going to practice. I would hold water and gatorade bottles at practice, and one coach would only come up to me, out of all the other employees, no matter what side of the field I was on. He would stare at me, wink, and ask me to guess what he wanted. He would grab my arm and look at me with knowing eyes, and I would get so scared I would toss a bottle at him and runaway.

These harassments continued into the summer, when a new coach arrived. He somehow knew my name the next day at practice, and would corner me in the tunnel entrance to field, asking me deeply personal questions, like if I had a boyfriend and what my "type" is. He would not leave me alone at practice, following me around to each drill, making remarks on how I looked that day. To no surprise, he found me on Instagram, and starting messaging me, for which then I blocked him. One day after practice, I realized he was following me home, as he was supposed to be going in the opposite direction, but was keeping a close pace behind me before he caught up to me outside my front door. He asked me what I was doing that weekend, and that we should go to the pool, because "I would look amazing in a bikini". This coach is still employed by Cal Football, just to make

that clear.

Another day, another coach found my Instagram, and liked all the pictures where I was wearing a bathing suit, even from years past. A player had given him my name, snapchat, and basically all forms of contact. When I did not reply to his messages, he would try to humiliate me in front of the players, yelling at me to do a job I was already doing. He would get especially upset when a player would talk to me, like he had formed some sort of territory over me.

This coach was so persistent in his text messages, and one night invited me over to the stadium offices at midnight, because I had noted that I was struggling with an economics class he had taken at another college. I was under the influence, and not legally in a state of mind to be consenting to sex. He snuck me into his office, I put my backpack and binder down, and he immediately grabbed for my waist. I was terrified, my mind was fuzzy, and I do not remember much from that night. He kept kissing me, pushing me against the wall, and I left.

The next day, he cornered me at practice and said "if you do not have sex with me, I will get you fired". I am a broke college student, I couldn't lose this job, and I was scared of him. Every night before a Cal home game, the team stays in the Claremont, luxury hotel nearby. I was staying there with my mom that night, as she was visiting me for the weekend. I get a text from the coach. "Meet me in my room". I couldn't let my mom down, if I got fired she wouldn't be able to support me, so I said I was leaving for the night. When I got to his room, I was scared, so I just laid on the bed and tried to make small talk. He started taking his clothes off. I started crying uncontrollably. He yelled at me to get out of his room, and that he could fuck any girl he wanted. From that point on I was still working for the team.

As for the players, they would look at me in practice and make lewd remarks, but I had been working so hard for my promotion from hydrotech to sports medicine intern, so I let myself feel like a piece of meat at practice, and then go home and try to forget about it until the next day. If I responded please leave me alone to a DM, I was answered back with "Im going to treat you like the hoe that you are". This was a message sent to me by receiver Jordan Duncan, known among the sports medicine interns as a sexual harasser. He still starts. After an intense application process, I was interviewed for the promotion, by which I had a great interview and had the schedule they were looking for, and the desire to go to physical therapy school. In the end, I did not receive the position because they did not want me in the training room taking focus away from the players. Those that were hired were either men or unqualified applicants, but they all had in common is that they wouldn't be "distracting the players".

The other girls working for the team were allowed to wear jean shorts and tank tops, and I could not. Justin Wilcox, head coach made it a special rule that only I would have to wear shoulder covering shirts, clearly singling me out and humiliating me. When I wore shorts, they were staring at my legs, when I wore leggings they were staring at my butt. I have never felt more objectified in my life, and I still have nightmares, often it is a coach doing sexual things to me without my consent or following me home. I am not ok, I had to leave Berkeley. I have emailed Justin Wilcox, Jim Knowlton, our Athletic director, and called and emailed many other coaches and athletic administrators. No response. Why not? Because thats the business.

One night, I was invited over to a football house, where I was given vast amounts of tequila, to which I later realized, no one else was drinking that much. That night is also a little fuzzy, but I clearly remember the players talking to another saying "looks like we are gonna get lucky tonight". Thankfully my friends rescued me from the house, calling me an Uber. I slipped out the back door unnoticed. I am still learning to build back my confidence, but have lost months worth of salary from having to quit, plus the therapists and psychiatrists are costing up to \$600 an hour. I am now behind a semester in college, so will have to graduate late.

But your mental and physical health do not matter when a revenue sport is involved. Shoutout to Jim Knowlton, Justin Wilcox, the Cal Athletics Administrative office for teaching me this lesson, and I hope to everyone ignoring my phone calls and emails, that you will see that I do not back down. Females to not back down. This is our time to change the game.

Cal Football, Your Time is Up.
Take Responsibility.

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