

# PARK CITIES PEOPLE

## Lacrosse Programs Caught Up In Player's Suit Against Coach

by *Georgia Fisher* · April 19, 2013

A former ESD student is suing the school's former lacrosse coach, claiming Kevin Barnicle punished the boy when his family refused to support the coach's side business.

Barnicle is now Greenhill's head coach and a director at Coast 2 Coast Lacrosse, which offers high-end camps, training, and recruitment services for young athletes. Other directors have led teams at Highland Park, Allen, Coppell, and Plano West high schools, as well as SMU.

Attorneys for Billy Munck, who left ESD in 2010 after his junior year, say Barnicle and C2C founder and director John Marano were negligent, putting their own interests before that of their players and clients, and — in Barnicle's case — refusing to let the teen officially play on ESD's varsity team because he didn't buy into expensive training programs. That, and Munck's father, William, volunteered for a popular lacrosse nonprofit that drew potential customers away from C2C.

"There's nothing wrong with making a living," the elder Munck said of for-profit sports organizations, but "coaching is a profession of love ... and if you don't love your players, you shouldn't be coaching."

His son, a Type 1 diabetic, wasn't the only child jilted by C2C, he added. "There were other kids from other families who were told, 'Get in line or be punished.'"

Munck is a partner at Munck Wilson Mandala, the firm representing Billy through lead attorney Jamil Alibhai. Another lawyer for the plaintiff, Charla Aldous, won a multi-million-dollar verdict against ESD in 2011, when she represented a student who was expelled after an affair with a teacher.

The group has yet to name a dollar amount sought in the lacrosse lawsuit, which was filed in mid-February and is still gathering steam.

Colin Dunham, attorney for Barnicle and Marano, says the Muncks' claims are simply revenge for not promoting Billy — who's now 20 and playing Division III lacrosse at

Southwestern University — to ESD’s varsity team.

That the boy was singled out “is the furthest thing from the truth,” Durham said. “[Barnicle] didn’t care one way or another whether Billy or anyone else participated” in C2C. Billy “had skill,” he added, “but he was lacking in strength and size when he was in high school.”

The plaintiff’s petition mentions Kirk Ventiquattro, a school and elite-team coach in New York who helped Billy hone his skills for at least five summers. Ventiquattro doesn’t “have any reference to how the other players were” at ESD, he cautions, “but I remember scratching my head,” he said, when he heard Billy hadn’t made varsity.

Though the lawsuit notes C2C stood to gain \$4,000 to \$5,000 per player through instructional fees, camps, gear, and other expenses, Barnicle “was getting a flat fee,” Durham explained, “whether one person showed up or 200 people showed up.” High-school coaches often run elite teams and training programs on the side, he said, but only a small fraction of Muncks’ varsity-bound teammates actually took part in C2C; most customers actually hail from Highland Park, Plano West, Southlake, and other North Texas schools.

In any case, “Barnicle’s actions were intentional actions,” Billy’s father said, “that were not condoned by ESD.”

Durham and his clients have a different take.

“We believe ESD had a duty to defend Kevin Barnicle,” Durham said, adding later that the school — from which Barnicle resigned, he said, after getting a better offer from Greenhill — “left Kevin in the lurch.”

A general statement from ESD notes that because the school isn’t a party in the lawsuit, “it would be inappropriate to comment on the allegations.”

And those allegations aren’t limited to Barnicle. Among other things, the Muncks allege that Marano — the C2C founder — invented his own credentials, including a colorful past as an All-American college player at St. John’s University. But Marano was never involved in the school’s lacrosse program, as a St. John’s spokesman confirmed. What’s more, the lawsuit describes him admitting under oath that he never even attended college.

Marano “may have inflated his experience,” Durham allowed. “But we don’t think he

lied. We don't think he blatantly misrepresented anything.”

A trial date has not been set for the case. As for the possibility of settling beforehand, Durham said, “there’s a theory about wanting to ‘buy your peace,’ even if you don’t think you’re in the wrong. We’ve asked for numbers, and they haven’t provided those for us.”