

# PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Washington, D.C.)

*The Committee to Restore Integrity to the USOC* is outraged that the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee Board would award any severance to disgraced former CEO, Scott Blackmun, let alone \$2.4 million. Scott Blackmun is under FBI investigation, he covered up for a serial child molester, he has been removed from the International Council of Arbitration for Sport, and has been called out for leadership failures by two major reports. More than 150 Olympians and Paralympians are now calling for USOPC Board and staff resignations for breach of their fiduciary duty. They are joined by much of the athlete-survivor and abuse-expert community.

In December 2018, the [Congressional House subcommittee report](#) and the USOC-funded [Ropes & Gray investigation](#) called for profound cultural changes to the USOPC; a reorganization that puts athletes' interests and their well-being first, rather than corporate or employee interests. Blackmun's \$2.4 million severance is more of the same; the Athletes were consulted or even told of the Blackmun severance. The amount represents more money than the USOPC gave to 47 NGBs.

The media surrounding the Ropes & Gray report focused on Scott Blackmun's bold lies to the investigators; he asserted that he gathered USOPC resources to help the victims and USA Gymnastics. In fact, he did not lift a finger to help either USA Gymnastics or the Olympic athletes. He did not lift a finger to alert USA Gymnastics member clubs, including Twistars, or Michigan State University, where Nassar went on to abuse dozens of new athletes.

But Blackmun's actions *without* his lies to Ropes & Gray investigators is worse; Blackmun's inaction was standard USOPC board policy. Athlete-complaints to the USOPC were to be handled by their NGB; but that's who was typically inflicting the harm on the athlete. *As matter of USOPC board policy*, athletes were to be ignored.

Ropes & Gray described the USOPC and USA Gymnastics (USAG) as creating an "ecosystem" that facilitated Larry Nassar's criminal acts; the organization and individuals ignored red flags, failed to recognize textbook grooming behaviors, established no boundaries between adults and children, and dismissed clear calls for help from girls and young women. The USOPC "...did not meaningfully involve athletes in decisions or policy-making; nor did it provide an effective avenue for athletes to raise and resolve complaints involving sexual misconduct matters."

The USOPC Board failed to conduct due diligence in numerous ways. First, the Board and leadership accepted Blackmun's mantra that "Congress hasn't given the USOPC the authority to interfere with NGBs; these are private businesses." This was never true, just the opposite; the Sports Act and USOPC by-laws require that the corporation protect athletes' right to compete. (See attached Team Integrity Legal Memo) Second, the USOPC's policies required the Olympic movement to knowingly ignore the interests of America's athletes, including their health, their well-being, and their sexual safety. Despite actual knowledge of real athlete-vulnerability of sexual abuse and ongoing retaliation, no current member of the USOPC board or senior leadership called for a re-consideration of their dangerous USOPC policies to not help athletes in peril prior to Congressional and media involvement. As the Ropes & Gray report repeatedly stated:

- Blackmun and the USOPC board did not adopt standard child-protective measures.
- Blackmun and the USOPC board decreased the voice of athletes in the governance process.

- Blackmun and the USOPC board did not create meaningful avenues for athletes to alert the Olympic movement of problems.
- Numerous athletes discussed their sexual abuse with Blackmun and USOPC board members directly, who refused to help them.
- Even after the 2010 and 2012 USOPC working groups on sexual abuse, Blackmun and the USOC board never created a process to allow the Olympic movement to become aware of the type and number of sexual abuse allegations at NGBs.
- The USOPC Board knew that their NGBs had inadequate policies, including overly formalized complaint processes, lack of sufficient training for employees handling sexual abuse matters, and inadequate attention to the risk of retaliation against athletes and others for raising complaints. Yet they did not require adoption of model policies and procedures.
- Even in 2012, when the Board passed a requirement that NGBs prohibit romantic and sexual relationships between coaches and athletes, regardless of age or consent when there was a power differential, the USOPC Board did no follow-up to assure their resolution was followed, and it was not.

The current USOPC Board and senior staff continue to function without regard to the Ropes & Gray Report or to Congressional House Subcommittee Report. Worse, the USOC is still functioning without regard to the interests of its athletes. The athletes, elected by their peers, were not consulted about any severance package, or about January USOPC board appointments as they were being vetted.

Scott Blackmun presided over a time of financial and corporate growth, thanks mostly to an upward value of the Olympic brand and heavy marketing by NBC. Even though Olympians were no longer “Amateur” after 1991, athletes did not share in this financial growth. Today, over 80% of our Olympians live below the poverty-line. Blackmun accomplished this feat by intentional athlete disempowerment, as we outlined in [February 4, 2018](#). Sexual abuse was merely one of many symptoms of the underlying problem; athletes’ lack of power. (See Attached Team Integrity Financial Report)

#### Athlete Disempowerment Since November 2018:

- Rich Bender and Steve Mesler were appointed to four-year terms on to the USOPC Board without input from the athletes or the AAC.
- The USOPC formed a committee to gift some of the most lucrative marks, the Olympic rings, to colleges and universities, without athlete input, in violation of the Sports Act.
  - Athletes are still not permitted to use the marks for their own fundraising.
- The USOPC has taken the position that it does not need to provide athletes with the due process protections guaranteed by the Sports Act and USOC by-laws. Athletes at Olympic Training Centers (“OTC”) face weaponized, vague complaints, labeled as somehow related to “SafeSport”. The complaints are along the lines of an anonymous “I don’t feel safe around this athlete.” The NGB then verbally conveys this allegation to the USOPC. Rather than provide the athlete with Sports Act protections, it summarily bans the athlete from using the OTC and from receiving funding. (See Attached Team Integrity “USOC New Due Process Challenges”)
- Athlete health insurance discontinued when athletes need it most; when they become sick, injured or become pregnant, and their rankings drop. Otherwise, the USOPC is insuring some of the youngest, healthiest people in the insurance pool.
- The USOPC required USA Women’s National Team in Soccer to sue their NGB when they face sex discrimination. Instead of the USOPC protecting the athlete, the USOPC funds the NGBs, including their legal costs against athletes.
- Team Integrity had direct conversations and written communications about Sarah Hirshland about the problem with conflicts of interest when the USOPC hires AAC members. Yet Hirshland then

went on to hire an AAC member, who just happened to sit on her CEO hiring committee just months prior. (See Attached “Team Integrity Athlete First Recommendations”)

- USA Track and Field is currently failing to adhere to its own selection procedures for the Pan American Games. Moreover, USATF did not adhere to the requirements of a AAA arbitration, requiring that any affected athlete be part of the arbitration. The USOPC has not stepped in to help athletes.
- USA Table Tennis adopted selection procedures that included the results of competitions that had already occurred. Additionally, the selection procedures gave undue discretion to the coach, rather than objective criteria, making them more vulnerable to abuse. The USOPC has not stepped in to help athletes.

Because of the most recent developments, *the Committee to Restore Integrity to the USOC* is insisting that the USOPC Board and its Senior Leadership must resign; the USOPC has now proven it cannot reform itself and has done that over and over. Sarah Hirshland still has no response to retaliation against athletes that report abuse. (Aspen Institute and Around the Rings Interviews, 2019) No Board member called upon Congress to rectify any barrier that the Sports Act may have imposed. The USOPC Board continues to pay more attention to lavish employee compensation and perks than to athlete well-being.

**Ed Williams, J.D.**, Olympian, one of the architects of the Sports Act in 1978, and lawyer frequently representing both athletes and NGBs, said, “No amount of spin from the USOPC can possibly justify the outrageous payment of \$2.4 million, authorized by the USOPC Board, to one of Nassar’s chief enablers. Last year, the USOPC Board announced that Blackmun was resigning for health reasons. But we know, and everyone knows, that the Board knew he was involved in covering up for Nassar for months. While the USOP will not admit it publicly, Blackmun was in effect fired “for cause” by the Board, but nonetheless given a \$2.4 million going away present to keep quiet.”

**Nancy Hogshead-Makar, J.D.**, Olympian and CEO of *Champion Women* said, “When the USOPC handed Scott Blackmun \$2.4 million dollars prior to the completion of the many Nassar investigations, it failed to exercise its fiduciary duty over the Olympic and Paralympic movement. The investigations have all shown Blackmun lied; that he was complicit in creating the conditions for the athletes to be abused, and complicit in protecting his own position and the organization, rather than the athletes he was responsible for protecting. If this severance does not convince Congress and the public that the USOPC board and senior staff is not fit to govern our national treasure, our Olympic movement, I don’t know what will. Given what was known at the time, and certainly what is known now, the Board and its senior leadership must resign.”

**Eli Bremer**, Olympian, Entrepreneur and Consultant said, “The USOPC is a nonprofit and Blackmun’s severance is offensive. Besides the embarrassing sum, the USOPC Board is not supposed to reward people who hurt athletes. It will not sit well with the athletes, the public at large or Congress. Suzanne Lyons and Sarah Hirshland keep telling us, ‘Trust me; we are turning the organization around,’ but we have not seen it. We call on more legislators to sign onto the bill sponsored by Senator Gardner and Congresswoman DeGette to re-write the Sports Act.”

**Members of Team Integrity include:**

**Executive Committee:**

Ed Williams, J.D., Oly

Nancy Hogshead-Makar, J.D.,  
Oly

Robert Allard, J.D.

Robert Andrews, MA, LMFT

Jessica Armstrong, J.D.

Eli Bremer, Oly

Chuck Foster, Former USOC

Officer

Herman R. Frazier, Oly, Former  
USOC Officer

Kathy Johnson Clarke, Oly

Lucila Hemmingsen, J.D.

Micki King, Oly

Jon Little, J.D.

Donna Lopiano, Ph.D.

Charles Milam, former USOC Board  
Member

Dia Rianda

Eva Rodansky

Pat Rodowsky  
Steven Sexton, Ph.D.  
Jennifer Sey  
Jennifer Spiegel, J.D.

Olympians, Coaches and Elite  
Athletes:

Mary Harvey, Oly  
Greg Louganis, Oly  
Scott Johnson, Oly  
Julianne McNamara, Oly  
Ariana Kukors Smith, Oly  
Martina Navratilova, Oly  
Nancy Lieberman, Oly  
Horace Holden, Oly  
Pam Shriver, Oly  
Tai Babilonia, Oly  
Tracee Talavera, Oly  
Bill Stapleton, Oly  
Dave Berkoff, Oly  
Caroline Lind, Oly  
Cynthia Potter, Oly  
Taraje Williams-Murray, Oly  
Don Barcome, Jr., Oly  
Larry Hough, Oly, former AAC  
and USOC Officer  
Mitzi Kramer Tighe, Oly  
Marci Frederick, Oly  
Scott Donie, Oly  
Cristina Teuscher Fabbri, Oly  
Ian Whatley, Oly  
Keith Sanderson, Oly  
Seth Kelsey, Oly  
Bonny Warner Simi, Oly  
Sebastian DeFrancesco, Oly  
Joe Jacobi, Oly  
Sean O'Neill, Oly  
Eric Barnes, Oly  
Barb Weinstein McGrath, Oly  
Debby McCormick, Oly  
Nick Peterson, Oly  
Jennifer Hooker Brinegaar, Oly  
Allen James, Oly  
Brenda Borgh Bartlett, Oly  
Janis Hape Dowd, Oly  
Deb Armstrong, Oly  
Anthony Zahn, Oly  
Andrew Hermann, Oly  
Carrie Sheinberg, Oly

Sue Heon-Preston, Oly  
Allison Wagner, Oly  
Linda Jezek Wittwer, Oly  
Inga Thompson, Oly  
Tiffany Cohen, Oly  
Joan Hansen, Oly  
Tracy Evans-Land, Oly  
Cathy (Catherine) Hearn, Oly  
Betsy Mitchell, Oly  
Doug Lewis, Oly  
Carrie Steinseifer Bates, Oly  
Steve Gregg, Oly  
Jack Elder, Oly  
Deena Deardurff Schmidt, Oly  
Arlene Limas, Oly  
Stacey Liapis-Fuchsgruber, Oly  
Troy Dumias, Oly  
Justin Dumias, Oly  
Christopher R. (Tiff) Wood, Oly  
Tim Caldwell, Oly  
John Morton, Oly  
Loren Drum, Oly  
Laurel (Brassey) Iverson, Oly,  
former AAC member  
Jay Bowerman, Oly  
Richard Mize, Oly  
Glen Eberle, Oly  
Dennis Donahue, Oly  
Megan Neyer, Ph.D., Oly  
Erik Henriksen, Oly  
Dennis Donahue, Oly  
Judy Blumberg, Oly  
Tom Lough, Ph.D., Oly  
Caroline Pingatore Holmes, Oly  
David C. Johnson, M.D., Oly  
Dana Schoenfield Reyes, Oly  
Pat Winslow Connolly, Oly  
Arlene Limas, Oly  
Jeff Olson, Oly  
Khadevis Robinson, Oly  
Jim Galanes, Oly  
Keith Frostad, Oly  
Victoria King, M.D., Oly  
Lynette Love, Oly  
Kay Poe Sheffield, Oly  
Julia Chase-Brand, Oly  
Kendis Moore Drake, Oly  
Pete Karns, Oly  
Caroline Lalive, Oly  
Jeffrey Swider-Peltz, Oly  
Cathy Jean Marino, Oly

Alison Owen Bradley, Oly  
Horace Holden, Oly  
Sue Baker, Oly  
Craig Ward, Oly  
Bill Koch, Oly  
Debbie Meyer, Oly  
Jeff Farrell, Oly  
Jim Henry, Oly  
Joe Lamb, Oly  
Levi Kirkpatrick, Oly  
George Mount, Oly  
Steve Cohen, Oly  
Jan Margo Henne, Oly  
Kevin Brochman, Oly  
Randy Barnes, Oly  
Justin Spring, Oly  
Cale Simmons, Oly  
Chelle Stack Marcella, Oly  
Kellie Wells Brinkley, Oly  
Lauren Gibbs, Oly  
Nathan Schrimsher, Oly  
Keith Brantly, Oly  
Carol Newnan Cronin, Oly  
Russell Hodge, Oly  
Jimmy Pino, Oly  
Ralph Wakley, Oly  
Craig Lincoln, Oly  
Michael Roth, Oly  
Matthew Laue, Oly  
Tasha Schwikert, Oly  
Russell Hodge, Oly  
Larissa Boyce, Oly  
Rick Early, Oly  
Barb McGrath, Oly  
Christine Witty, Oly  
Phoebe Mills, Oly  
Lauren McFall Gardner, Oly  
B.J. Bedford Miller, Oly  
Greg Ruckman, Oly  
Samantha Livingstone, Oly  
John Caldwell, Oly and Oly Coach  
Janet Ely, Oly and Coach  
Bob Balk, Paralympian  
Jon Lujan, Paralympian  
Tahl Leibovitz, Paralympian  
Ted Fey, Ph.D., Paralympian and  
IPC Member  
Marty Hall, Oly Coach  
Don Gambriel, Oly Coach  
Frank Thomas, Oly Coach  
Jan Olesinski, Oly and Coach

Tracy Sundlun, Oly Team  
 Manager  
 Monica Rowland, Elite Athlete  
 and AAC Member  
 Art Stegen, Nat'l Team Coach  
 Doe Yamashiro, DO, Nat'l Team  
 Dagny Knutson, Nat'l Team  
 Vanessa Atler, Nat'l Team  
 Peggy Haslach, Nat'l Team  
 Estee Pryor, Nat'l Team  
 Chris Riegel, Nat'l Team  
 Christine Looock, M.D., Nat'l  
 Team  
 Patty Spees Maysent, Nat'l Team  
 John Walker, Nat'l Team Coach  
 Rebecca Carlson, Elite Coach  
 Pam Boteler, Elite Athlete  
 Lara Carlson, Elite Athlete  
 Dawn Riley, Elite Athlete  
 Carmen Small, Elite Athlete  
 Susie Kincade, Elite Athlete  
 Perry Toles, J.D., Elite Athlete  
 Nate Di Palma, Elite Athlete  
 Rachael Presler, J.D., Elite  
 Athlete  
 Julie Whitman DeLucia  
 Chris DeSantis, Coach

Melissa Merson  
 Olivia Venuto  
 Danielle Moore, Psy.D.  
 Louise Harder  
 Grace French  
 Sarah Power Barnard  
 Kay Rogness  
 Julie Bremner Romias  
 Lisa Johnson  
 Sarah Ehekircher  
 Michele Kurtzman Greenfield  
 Lisa Burt, in memory of Sarah  
 Burt

Child Protection Organizations:

The Army of Survivors  
 Champion Women  
 CHILD USA  
 Equality League  
 Set The Expectation  
 Safety Advisors for Educational  
 Campuses, LLC  
 Abuse Free Sport, North America

The Honorable Rosemarie  
 Aquilina, presided over the  
 Nassar sentencing

Sport Leaders:

Andrew Zimbalist, Ph.D., Sport  
 Economist, Professor  
 Daniel Marburger, Ph.D., Sport  
 Economist, Professor  
 Mark Conrad, J.D. Professor  
 Jacqueline A. Brummer, J.D.  
 Myron Finkelstein, Graduate  
 Professor, Global Sports Business  
 Dan Rascher, Ph.D., CVA, Sport  
 Management Professor  
 Don Porter, former International  
 Softball Federation  
 Becky Clark, Ph.D., CMPC,  
 LCSW-R  
 Jeff Dimond, Executive in Olympic  
 Movement  
 Becca Gillespy Peter  
 Rene Henry  
 Hia Sebastian  
 Steve Delsohn  
 Joan Stiedinger, Ph.D., CMPC  
 Mike Jacki, former ED of USA  
 Gymnastics

Athletes Abused in Olympic  
 Movement:

Rachael Denhollander, J.D.  
 Morgan McCall  
 Sarah Klein, J.D.  
 Danielle Moore, Psy.D.  
 Amanda Thomashow  
 Chrissy Weathersby Ball  
 Larissa Boyce  
 Sara Teristi  
 Diana Nyad  
 Jessica Howard  
 Courtney Kiehl  
 Bridie Farrell  
 Jancy Thompson  
 Debra Denithorne Grodensky  
 Dani Bostick  
 Mandy Maloon

Child Protection Leaders:

Marci Hamilton, J.D.  
 Brenda Tracy  
 Michelle Simpson Tuegel, J.D.  
 Maddie Salamone, J.D.  
 S. Daniel Carter