


Members at posh Westchester country club preyed on female staffers: lawsuit

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Leonard Greene

A decorated squash player who expanded the sport at a suburban country club was fired after lodging a sexual harassment complaint against managers who allowed male members to abuse female staffers, according to a new lawsuit.

The Westchester Country Club in Rye is a bucolic playground boasting two championship golf courses, tennis courts, squash facilities and a beach club on Long Island Sound.

But hidden beyond the lush greens and gorgeous views is a toxic work environment rife with sexual harassment, where rich male members are allowed to prey upon female staffers, even in a #MeToo environment that frowns upon such behavior, court papers claim.

Natalie Grainger, an award winning squash player, who was running the club's squash program, raised a racket about the behavior only to be told by company managers to resign when she wouldn't drop the issue, according to the Manhattan Federal Court lawsuit filed on Thursday.



Professional Squash player Natalie Grainger (Bryan Bedder/Getty Images)

When she refused to resign, the lawsuit said, Grainger was fired, a harsh punishment for blowing the whistle to protect the women she worked with.

“I was shocked when I learned about the behavior of certain men at the WCC, and I ultimately lost my job because I chose to stand up for myself and other women,” Grainger said in a statement. “I hope this lawsuit will help all who have endured this kind of discrimination and bring change to the culture at the WCC.”

Grainger, 45, became concerned in 2018 that female club employees were being harassed by male club members, according to the lawsuit.

She learned that two of the women she supervised were involved in sexual relationships with members, and in one instance, Grainger had to intervene because one of these women had, according to the woman’s sister, been drugged while out with a club member, the lawsuit said.

Grainger also saw in 2021 that a female employee was included in a “sext” exchange among male club members discussing a “lineup” of women they had apparently picked out for the evening’s “fun.”

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“Based on this pattern of conduct, Grainger reasonably believed that the club was tolerating, if not permitting, the sexual harassment of female employees,” the lawsuit claims.

Grainger raised her concerns to the company’s human resources department, which was supposed to “fully investigate” and protect her as a whistleblower, according to court papers.

The company did neither, the lawsuit alleges. Within months, Grainger was fired by executives who claimed Grainger had spent excessive time away from work.

A Westchester Country Club executive did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Grainger, who lives in Connecticut, was a competitive squash player and coach for more than 20 years. In 2018, the Westchester club hired her as squash director. There, she earned an annual base salary of \$145,000, plus additional compensation from lessons, clinics, camps, tournaments and professional merchandise.

Grainger’s base salary, though, was less than the \$170,000 that the club charges members as an initiation fee, the lawsuit details. Members pay an additional \$15,000 in annual fees.

Grainger is suing for monetary and punitive damages to be determined at trial.
