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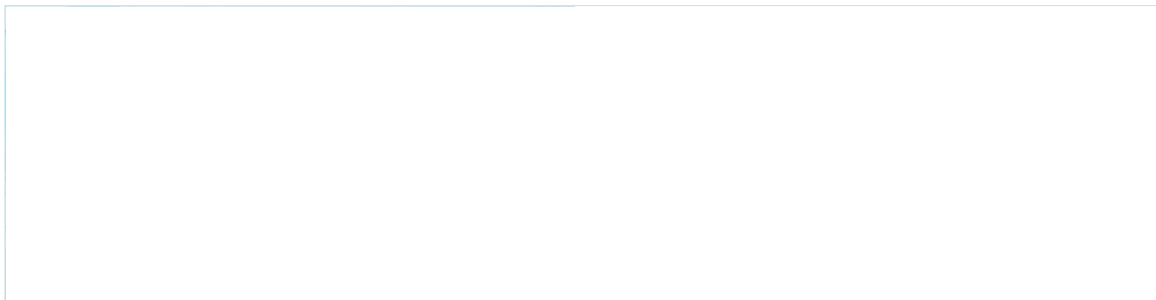
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Former basketball coach sues Fla. A&M, says he was fired because of his multiple sclerosis

James L. Rosica in Tallahassee

Published: October 23, 2014

A former Florida A&M University basketball coach is suing the school on a disability discrimination claim, saying he was fired after the athletic director and others learned he had multiple sclerosis.

Condric Sanders, who was an assistant men's basketball coach, filed suit under the Florida Civil Rights Act in Leon County Circuit Court last Thursday.

He worked for FAMU August 2011 to this April, his suit said; though his photo and biography are still on the university's website.

Sanders – who previously coached at Highland Community College, Robert Morris University and Lewis University in Illinois – was diagnosed last August with MS, in which the body's immune system attacks and destroys its own nerve fibers.

Those who have the chronic illness may experience bouts of paralysis, dizziness, fatigue and other symptoms, though many patients experience recurring periods of remission.

Last September, Sanders, 46, said he met with then-Rattlers Head Coach Clemon Johnson, who knew about his diagnosis.

He told Sanders then-FAMU Athletic Director Mike Smith had expressed concern – not about Sanders' health, but whether he could still "be useful," the suit said.

Despite assuring Johnson his condition wouldn't hurt the team, Sanders said he began facing "discriminatory treatment," including having coaching duties taken away from him.

He was "isolated from the team during travel," excluded from scouting activities and not allowed to have a say in team decision making, the suit said.

This January, he said he was denied a promotion to head assistant coach, a job that had been promised to him, with the position going to a "far less qualified and experienced candidate."

Sanders said he filed a discrimination charge the next month with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the school took notice of that filing in March.

By April, he had been fired, along with Johnson and another assistant coach who is Johnson's son. Johnson's record was 32 wins and 64 losses during his three seasons with the team, according to records.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association banned FAMU's football and basketball teams from postseason play for 2014-15 because of players' poor grades.

But Sanders' suit says players he recruited had "the highest (grades) in years" for the school.

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Sanders is represented by attorney Chad E. Levy of Fort Lauderdale.

Tribune/Scripps requested comment on the suit from the university earlier today; this post will be updated when there's a response.



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