

First settlement reached in Pennsylvania State sexual abuse civil case

By Ian Simpson, Reuters

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WASHINGTON -- Pennsylvania State University has agreed to a settlement with a 25-year-old man who was sexually abused by former assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky in a campus shower, the man's attorney said late on Saturday.

It is the first of 26 claims to be finalized in the Sandusky scandal, Philadelphia attorney **Tom Kline** told Reuters. He declined to give details of the settlement but the university has approved spending US\$60 million for the payouts.

The man, known as Victim 5 in court proceedings, was assaulted by Sandusky in August 2001, six months after then-graduate assistant Michael McQueary reported to university officials that he saw Sandusky rape a boy in a campus shower.

"My client is relieved," Kline said in a telephone interview. "He was dragged into this as someone who had a knock on the door from the state police. He didn't seek this out."

The settlement was reached on Friday, he said. It was first reported by the Philadelphia Inquirer newspaper on Saturday.

Sandusky was convicted last year on 45 counts of abusing 10 boys in a 15-year period. Sandusky, 69, was sentenced to 30 to 60 years in prison in a case that tarnished the reputation of late Penn State coach Joe Paterno and focused national attention on child sexual abuse.

Because the assault occurred so soon after the McQueary report and took place on campus, Victim 5's case was considered pivotal in reaching a settlement with other victims, Kline said.

The man testified both in the trial and in Sandusky's sentencing hearing.

Kline said he had reached the deal for a year with Michael Rozen, a lawyer hired by the university to help settle the cases. The newspaper had interviewed Rozen and Kline about the settlement.

Rozen told the Inquirer that lawyers in the other 25 suits had received the paperwork for settlements and their signoff was expected to be imminent. He the settlement with Victim 5 was one of the highest negotiated because of its circumstances.

Rozen told the newspaper that under the terms of the settlements, the victims have agreed not to pursue other suits against Penn State or the Second Mile, Sandusky's charity through which he met many of the victims.

They also have agreed to cede their right to sue Second Mile to the university, which plans to go to court to try to get the charity's insurer to reimburse the university for some of the claims.

Kline said the accord would be good for both victims and Penn State. The victims would get closure and the university would "have an open road to recovery of a good portion of this from insurers," he said.

Former university President Graham Spanier and two other university officials face trial on charges of failing to report and act on the abuse in the 2001 case reported by McQueary.