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## COLLEGE SPORTS

# Northwestern lacrosse player's lawsuit charges school was warned about baseball player whom she says sexually assaulted her

By Robert McCoppin and Jonathan Bullington  
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Rocky and Berenice Miller Park in Evanston, home to Northwestern University baseball, on July 10, 2023.  
(Brian Cassella/Chicago Tribune)

A Northwestern University lacrosse player has filed a federal negligence lawsuit claiming that the school was warned about a baseball player whom she accuses of sexually assaulting her.

“Rather than take measures to protect Jane Doe, and other students ... as obligated by federal law and its own student handbook – Northwestern instead ignored the warnings, and admitted him anyway,” the suit states.

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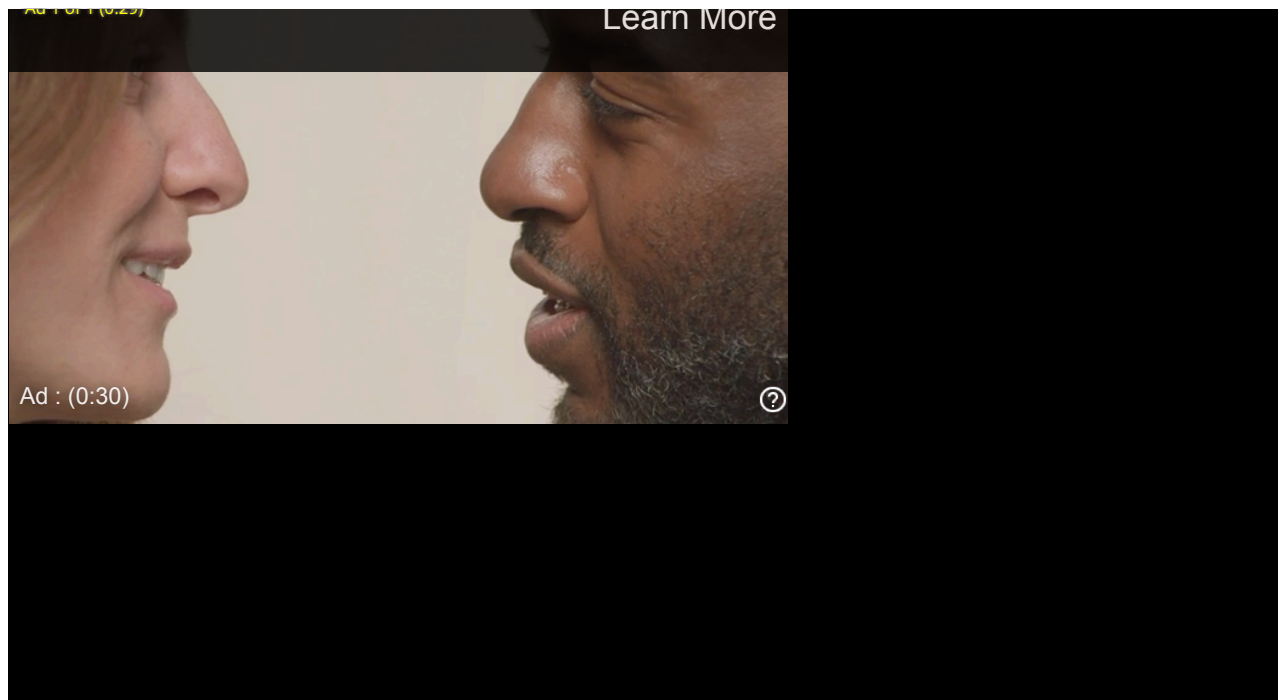
The lacrosse player, identified anonymously as Jane Doe, is suing the university and its board of trustees. The Tribune is not naming the baseball player because he has not been charged with a crime. School officials said they are investigating the allegations.

The baseball player is also a defendant in another lawsuit filed in 2022 in Cook County. In that suit, a person also identified as a Jane Doe, claimed that the player repeatedly touched her thigh and buttocks despite her objections in junior high, and grabbed her breast after she told him to stop touching her when both were juniors in high school.

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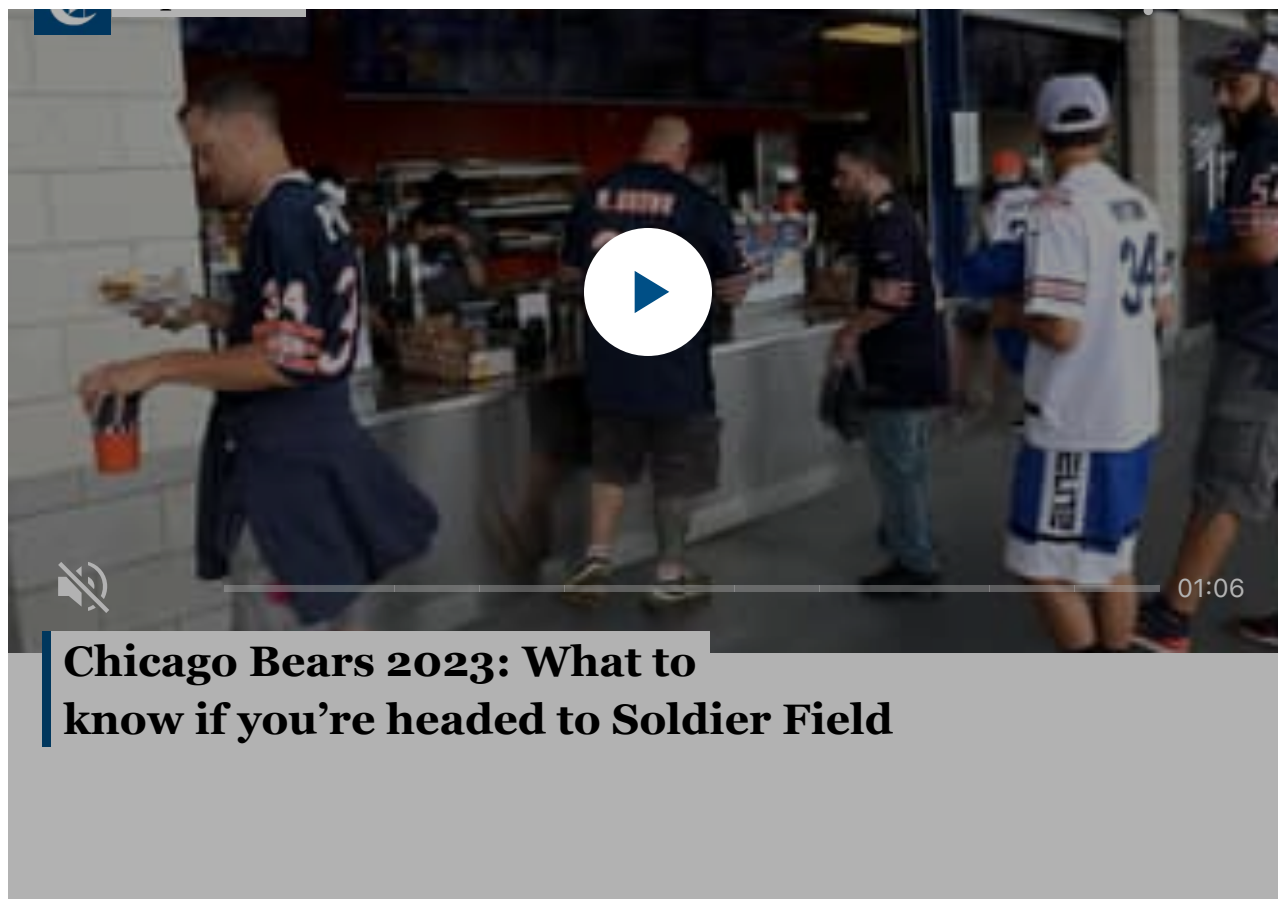
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The federal suit, filed by attorney Tamara Holder, states that the baseball player admitted to the action in writing to school officials.

The baseball player's attorney filed an objection to the county suit, challenging the plaintiff's right to file the suit anonymously.



The baseball player also has filed his own suit in Cook County against several other former classmates claiming that they defamed him with online social media posts accusing him of inappropriate touching. Attorney Victor Henderson later added the Jane Doe who'd filed the county suit to the baseball player's defamation suit.

“These allegations are an inappropriate attempt to smear (his) name in a desire to latch onto recent headlines about Northwestern University for leverage,” Henderson told the Tribune. Recently, Northwestern has been the focus of several lawsuits and accusations that it allowed sexualized hazing on the football team as well as hazing in other sports.

“Quite a few of the students have already retracted their allegations

knowing that they were false,” Henderson said. “Both the high school and Northwestern have already investigated the allegations and found them to be untrue. (He) is not going to sit by while others try to ruin his reputation.”

Northwestern's Ryan Field on Monday, July 10, 2023, (Terrence Antonio James/Chicago Tribune)

According to the new suit by Jane Doe, in 2020, at least seven current or former classmates of the baseball player warned Northwestern (including then-President Morton Schapiro, then-head baseball coach Spencer Allen and other officials) that he had a documented history as a serial sexual abuser of female classmates in middle and high school, and could harm women at the college.

The lacrosse player didn't know anything about the accusations against the baseball player, and after they both enrolled at Northwestern in 2021, said she formed a platonic relationship with the baseball player.

They “quickly became friends and she found him to be simpatico,” the suit stated. Had she known about his past, the student said, she wouldn't have associated with him.

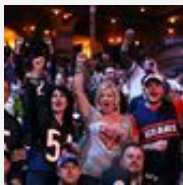
On the night of July 18, 2022, while she was staying at a home rented by teammates for a lacrosse summer camp, the baseball player sexually assaulted her by performing oral sex and forcing her to touch him, the suit states.

That night, Jane Doe invited him over to watch a movie, but gave him no indication that she was interested in him sexually, as he knew that she had

a girlfriend. She repeatedly told him to stop, the suit stated, but he refused.

After that, Jane Doe became depressed and withdrawn, and became afraid in an environment where she previously felt safe, the suit stated. She struggled with attending classes, her grades declined, and she dropped out of lacrosse, missing out on the team's national championship this spring.

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The suit accuses the school of failing to properly investigate the baseball player, both after initial complaints and after Jane Doe's complaint.

In response, Northwestern issued the following statement: "After receiving Jane Doe's email in January 2023, an Athletics official reported her allegations to Northwestern University's Office of Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance (OCR). On the same day, OCR contacted Jane Doe and provided information about resources, supportive measures and resolution options. Jane Doe's allegations are currently under

investigation by OCR, and OCR remains in contact with her.”

The baseball player’s defamation suit maintains that his original accuser, whose words were repeated by others to Northwestern and online, issued a letter of retraction and apology to the player.

Holder, the attorney for the Jane Doe in the federal lawsuit, is a former Fox News commentator. She received a \$2.5 million settlement from the network in 2017 after she reported a sexual assault by a Fox executive.

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