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Former coach Jessie Evans sues USF over firing

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO -- Jessie Evans sued the University of San Francisco on Thursday for unlawful termination of his contract as men's basketball coach.

Evans was fired last month by the school after being forced to take a leave of absence in December. Eddie Sutton replaced Evans for the remainder of the season for the Dons and won his 800th career game.

Evans had two years remaining on his contract worth about \$600,000 in compensation and benefits. He is seeking that money as well as future lost compensation based on damage to his reputation.

The suit filed in San Francisco Superior Court also seeks compensatory damages for humiliation, mental anguish and emotional distress and punitive damages.

USF athletic director Debra Gore-Mann and attorney Michael Vartain are also defendants in the suit.

Evans claims Gore-Mann harmed his reputation when she said in a news release that Evans had requested a leave of absence in December. Evans said the leave was not voluntary.

Vartain is being sued for telling the San Francisco Chronicle last month that Evans committed numerous "secondary" NCAA violations amounting to the "loss of control" of the program.

Vartain declined to comment and university spokesman Ryan McCrary said the school would have no comment because officials had not had time to review the lawsuit.

Evans was hired from Louisiana-Lafayette in April 2004 to replace fired coach Phil Mathews. He had a 45-57 record with the Dons, leading them to the NIT in his first season.

His career coaching record is 163-137. Evans also worked as an assistant at Minnesota, Texas, Wyoming, San Diego State and Arizona. He spent nine seasons on Lute Olson's staff at Arizona, helping the team win a national title his final year.

The school is still searching for a new coach.
