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**Romanucci & Blandin files civil lawsuit against the Chicago Blackhawk Hockey Team for concealing sexual abuse and harassment of a player**

*Complaint details abuse during 2009-2010 Stanley Cup champion season against same perpetrator accused by player Kyle Beach*

**CHICAGO (November 6, 2023)** – Romanucci & Blandin, LLC announces the filing of lawsuit that alleges sexual assault of a former player on the Chicago Blackhawk professional hockey team by a member of the coaching staff and an institutional cover-up to protect the abusive coach who groomed, harassed, threatened and assaulted our client. The claims in this civil lawsuit are from the 2009-2010 Stanley Cup championship season and detail grooming, physical and mental abuse, and harassment by the same coach involved in a similar 2021 lawsuit by player Kyle Beach.

The complaint is filed as a John Doe case to protect the plaintiff's identity. The lawsuit was filed November 2, 2023, in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Law Division. The Chicago Blackhawk Hockey Team, Inc. is named as the sole defendant. The complaint is seeking a jury trial to provide justice for the harm done to the plaintiff.

At the beginning of the 2009-2010 season, plaintiff John Doe was a member of the Blackhawk's American Hockey League affiliate and was called up to be a member of the Chicago Blackhawks roster of "Black Aces," a group of prospect players who could play at the NHL level in the case of an injury, suspension, or other reason that prevented a Blackhawks roster player from playing. Black Aces spent extensive time with the team and coaches, and traveled with the Blackhawks for away games.

Then-team Video Coach Brad Aldrich had direct and constant access to the plaintiff and used his authority as part of the coaching staff to groom, harass, threaten, and assault the plaintiff for his own sexual gratification. The complaint details actions to and with the plaintiff by Aldrich and including Aldrich: making overt gestures to touch and rub against plaintiff, saying Aldrich could improve plaintiff's prospects with the team, hosting pool parties and playing pornography and arranging for massages for plaintiff, surprising plaintiff while plaintiff was

being intimate with a woman and rubbing plaintiff's feet in an apparent effort to join the encounter, offering to pay for plaintiff to receive sexual favors if Aldrich could watch, sending plaintiff pictures of Aldrich's penis, texting plaintiff that Aldrich could perform oral sex on a man better than any woman, and threatening plaintiff's career if he reported the actions.

Brad Aldrich's predatory tendencies were well-known to the team.

In May of 2010, the plaintiff showed the text message he received with a photo of Aldrich's penis to President John McDonough's secretary, who reported the incident to the team management, including Al MacIsaac, who was Senior Vice President of Hockey Operations. No action was taken against Aldrich, in direct violation of the team's policies prohibiting harassment. The team leaders elected to place the Blackhawks' Stanley Cup ambitions ahead of player safety, including that of the plaintiff, and suppressed any investigation, or other action that may affect the "team chemistry" and/or the team's Stanley Cup aspirations. The Director of Human Resources was not informed of Brad Aldrich's misconduct until nearly one week after the Blackhawks won the 2010 Stanley Cup championship in June 2010.

Even after the allegations were finally reported to the Director of Human Resources, no investigation occurred. To the contrary, the Blackhawks, with a callous indifference to its players and its own policies, through its actions and inactions allowed Aldrich to participate in the team's victory celebrations with the same players whom he had sexually assaulted.

Aldrich was also accused of sexual assaulting player Kyle Beach during the same 2010 Championship season. That case was similar in that Beach claimed the team was made aware but failed to act. The Beach case was settled in December 2021 and the terms are confidential.

Because of Beach's claims, the team commissioned an independent investigation that found Aldrich had engaged in sexual misconduct while he was with the Blackhawks in 2010. In response, the Blackhawks were fined \$2 million by the NHL for what it described as "the organization's inadequate internal procedures and insufficient and untimely response."

Ultimately, Brad Aldrich was permitted to resign quietly from the team. The team continued to pay him for several months, he received a severance package, a bonus, and a championship ring.

After leaving the Blackhawks organization in 2010, Aldrich went on to work for the University of Notre Dame and later Miami University, where he resigned in November 2012 after he was accused of sexual assault there, and in September 2013 was convicted of having sexual contact with a minor while serving as a high school coach in Houghton, Michigan in March 2013.

As a result, Aldrich is accused or convicted of sexual assaults in connection with coaching jobs at the NHL, college and high school levels. He served nine months in prison, being released in June 2014, and was required to register as a sex offender in the state of Michigan and served five years on probation until January 2019.

Our plaintiff left the Blackhawks organization after that season and is now playing professionally overseas.

The complaint includes six counts against the defendant including: Negligent Hiring and Retention, Negligent Supervision, Negligent Infliction of Emotional Distress, Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress, Violations of the Gender Violence Act, 740 ILCS 82/1, Willful and Wanton Conduct.

The plaintiff is represented by Romanucci & Blandin Founding Partner Antonio M. Romanucci and Senior Attorney Jason J. Friedl.

“The Chicago Blackhawks were keeping a dirty secret in 2010 while they enjoyed public accolades and made enormous profits off their team’s Stanley Cup win. Team leaders were very aware they had an abuser on the coaching staff and they ignored their own policies - as well as human decency - and did nothing to report it, remove the abuser or protect their players,” said Founding Partner Antonio M. Romanucci, Romanucci & Blandin. “This lawsuit aims to obtain justice for our client and hold the team accountable for the abuse and cover up that took place and was known within the Blackhawks organization. After the Jenner & Block report that confirmed the abuse took place, the team acknowledged and pledged to be a better organization in the future. How they respond to this new lawsuit will measure if any progress has been made.”

"It is difficult to explain the incredible impact this type of abuse has on a person, and the challenges it creates for their mental health, relationships and career. Our client’s professional aspirations were weaponized by this abuser who groomed and manipulated the young player for his own gratification and then threatened to destroy our client’s life-long ambition to play professional hockey in the NFL. As is common with survivors of sexual assault, it has taken this player some time to come to grips with what happened, and to prepare to advocate for himself with those responsible. We are immensely proud of the courage our client has demonstrated in coming forward,” said Senior Attorney Jason J. Friedl, Romanucci & Blandin.

To learn more about legal options involving sexual abuse and hazing please visit <https://www.rblaw.net/practices-sexual-abuse-hazing-cases>.

### **About Romanucci & Blandin, LLC**

*Romanucci & Blandin is a Chicago-based national trial practice committed to fighting for victims of negligence, abuse and wrongful death. Founded in 1998, we have decades of history securing verdicts and settlements for our clients - many for millions of dollars and others record-*

*setting awards. Our expertise ranges from medical malpractice and sexual abuse cases involving individual or institutional negligence to civil rights, police misconduct and workers' compensation, making Romanucci & Blandin a valuable legal resource to individuals and groups of people who have been injured by others' wrongdoing. Referring attorneys and clients say several factors differentiate our firm: Our record of success, depth of experience, talented and dedicated legal team, tireless preparation and strategic use of communications to fight for the rights of those whose lives have been changed forever. We are different from other personal injury firms in that our work does not stop when a verdict or settlement is secured. We are often inspired by our clients' experiences and commit resources to create change in our communities. For more information about Romanucci & Blandin, please visit [www.rblaw.net](http://www.rblaw.net) or call (312) 313-7543.*

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