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Footballer Gets 3 Months In 'Varsity Blues' Case

By **Brian Dowling**

Law360 (July 15, 2020, 11:53 AM EDT) -- Former Canadian Football League player David Sidoo will serve three months behind bars for paying \$200,000 to have someone take the SAT for his sons — one of two parents sentenced Wednesday in the high-profile "Varsity Blues" college admissions and testing scandal.

Referring to Sidoo's crime as an "unbelievable lack of integrity, morality and common sense," U.S. District Judge Nathaniel M. Gorton accepted the binding **plea deal** the Canadian athlete and businessman reached with prosecutors in March. In addition to spending three months in prison, Sidoo will pay a \$250,000 fine.

The judge said Sidoo — a former professional football player for the B.C. Lions and the Saskatchewan Roughriders who became a fixture of the Vancouver business and charitable communities — let his "selfish desire," "pride," and "enormous wealth overcome all of what you apparently want to stand for."

"You entered into a conspiracy to cheat your sons' way into prestigious universities by paying someone an inordinate amount of money to create false identification and take college entrance exams in your sons' names."

Before Judge Gorton issued his sentence, Sidoo told the court: "I make no excuses. I broke the law. ... I hope that, in time, people will not just see me based on the worst moment in my life."

Impressed with Sidoo's remorse, Judge Gorton responded: "It is important that you acknowledge it and realize how many constituencies you have disappointed and how you are going to have to work after this relatively brief period of incarceration at making up to those who have admired you and continue to admire you."

Sidoo — facing a January 2021 trial date — admitted to paying \$200,000 so Singer could have test-taking whiz Mark Riddell, who has also admitted guilt, take the SATs while posing as Sidoo's two sons.

His attorney Martin G. Weinberg told the court how, unlike so many other parents caught up in the government's "Operation Varsity Blues," Sidoo never accepted Singer's overtures to pay for his kids to take a side-door into an elite school by molding them into fake athletic recruits.

In a joint statement with his co-counsel David Z. Chesnoff, Weinberg said Sidoo "pleaded guilty today and in doing so, expressed remorse — bringing a conclusion to the legal case against him."

"Mr. Sidoo has devoted his adult life to making positive contributions through philanthropic endeavours and donations to support many causes," the lawyers said in the statement. "His life should not be defined by its worst moments, and he is committed to a more productive future."

Earlier Wednesday, U.S. District Judge Allison D. Burroughs sentenced a California mother, Karen Littlefair, to five weeks in prison and fined her \$209,000 for paying William "Rick" Singer's sham charities to have an employee complete much-needed college credits so her son could finish his

degree at Georgetown University.

"As a mom myself," the judge said, "reading this pre-sentence report has given me thought about how to raise a child and what one teaches a child. By involving your son in this, what you've taught is, it's OK to cheat, and it's OK to take shortcuts."

Having denied Littlefair's request to skip jail and have a probationary sentence, Judge Burroughs said the most critical part of the punishment is the 300 hours of community service required during her two years of supervised release.

"I think about the fact that you have been a giving person, but in some ways, the giving has been giving to people like yourself," Judge Burroughs said, noting a series of donations Littlefair had made. "They show a very insular perspective."

The 300 hours of community service need to be "direct, hands-on service" to people in need, the judge said.

Prosecutors say an employee of Singer's The Edge College & Career Network took three online classes for Littlefair's son offered by Georgetown and one provided by Arizona State University. The credits were transferred to the elite D.C. school, the government alleged.

In December, Littlefair **pled guilty** in exchange for a recommendation from prosecutors for a four-month prison sentence, a year of supervised release and a \$9,500 fine.

According to the indictment, Littlefair balked at Singer's \$3,000 bill and asked for a discount because his employee only achieved a C letter grade for her son, calling the cheating experience "a nightmare." Singer refused the discount request, writing back that "the process was a nightmare for all," according to the indictment.

In their filing recommending a four-month sentence, prosecutors said Littlefair's conduct is comparable to others who have received longer sentences in the "Varsity Blues" cases. The sentencing memo said Littlefair allowed her son to be complicit in the scheme.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Eric Rosen told the court Wednesday that Littlefair "eagerly embraced the fraud." He added, "Prison is needed here."

Littlefair's attorney argued for a probationary sentence in a court filing prior to the hearing, citing "genuine remorse for her actions, acknowledging her misconduct and accepting full responsibility for the instant offense."

Her attorney, Kenneth B. Julian of Manatt Phelps & Phillips LLP, said Littlefair's "love of her son and, I think, many years helping him overcome learning differences overwhelmed her judgment."

Speaking before sentencing, Littlefair told the court she deeply regrets what she did, repeating that her actions flowed from a "love of her son."

David Sidoo is represented by Martin G. Weinberg of the Law Offices of Martin G. Weinberg PC and David Z. Chesnoff and Richard A. Schonfeld of Chesnoff & Schonfeld.

Karen Littlefair is represented by Kenneth B. Julian of Manatt Phelps & Phillips LLP.

The government in both cases is represented by Eric S. Rosen, Justin D. O'Connell, Kristen A. Kearney and Leslie A. Wright of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts.

The cases are U.S. v Sidoo et al., case number 1:19-cr-10080, and U.S. v. Littlefair, case number 1:19-cr-10463, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.

Update: This story has been updated with details about David Sidoo's case.

Correction: A previous version of this story incorrectly quoted part of a statement by Littlefair's attorney.

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