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LOCAL

Former MSU coach Kathie Klages earns early release from probation

Ken Palmer Lansing State Journal

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LANSING – Kathie Klages, the former Michigan State University gymnastics coach convicted of lying to police in connection with the Larry Nassar scandal, has been discharged from probation more than seven months early.

Ingham County Circuit Judge Joyce Draganchuk agreed to release Klages from probation on a request from the people who supervised her.

In a hearing Monday, a Michigan Department of Corrections probation agent described Klages as "absolutely wonderful" to work with, saying the former coach met all the requirements of her sentence and completed 200 hours of community service making masks and blankets for those who needed them during the pandemic.

The agent said Klages is remorseful, and that's motivated her to be a good role model.

Klages was convicted by a jury in early 2020 of lying to police during a June 21, 2018 interview with special agents from the state Attorney General's Office.

Klages said she didn't recall two gymnasts telling her in 1997 that Nassar, the former MSU sports medicine doctor who abused hundreds of girls and young women over decades, had sexually abused them

The former gymnasts testified Klages was dismissive of their complaints, making them feel embarrassed and humiliated. Klages maintained her innocence at trial, saying she didn't recall the conversation.

Nassar is serving decades in prison after being convicted of sexual assault and possessing child pornography.

in August, Draganchuk sentenced Klages to 18 months' probation, with 90 days in jail.

Klages served her jail time and "left it better than it was when she went in," mentoring a young person in the process, Takura Nyamfukudza, one of her attorneys, told the judge on Monday.

The AG's office, which prosecuted the case, did not object to Klages being released early from probation. The Nassar victims who said they told Klages of being abused were notified of Monday's hearing but did not respond, AG officials said.

On Monday, Klages told Draganchuk she did laundry, cleaned showers, volunteered to work in the garden and attended therapy while in jail. She said she learned she didn't need to be a coach to mentor young people.

"I did find out throughout this whole situation that I don't need gymnastics to do that," Klages told Draganchuk. "I can still mentor without being a coach. I did that with a couple of people in the jail."

"I have to say that you stepped up and did everything that was asked of you, and you did it with a smile on your face," Draganchuk told Klages on Monday. "I don't think I can ask anything more than that."

The judge urged Klages, as she works with young people, to "make sure they know they have voices and that they can be heard and that they'll be supported when they speak."

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