



News

Navratilova's Ex Sues for Palimony As 'Business' Partner

by Kilian Melloy
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Martina Navratilova (Source:AP)

Tony Layton, the former life partner of tennis champ Martina Navratilova, now says that she was Navratilova's business partner as well, and deserves compensation for the eight years she devoted to the star athlete.

An EDGE article from last June 24 reported that Layton had taken her ex to court, claiming that she had been expelled from their life together with nothing and that their long relationship warranted some level of financial recompense.

Claiming that she was "kicked out on the streets with only the clothes on my back," Layton, 56, who

celebrated a wedding ceremony with Navratilova in 2000, sought to enforce an alleged promise between the two that they would share their property.

The property in question included several homes that the couple purchased, to the tune of millions.

Though the marriage was not a legally binding civil ceremony, Layton's suit claimed that Layton is owed a portion of those assets for the 'emotional, mental and physical trauma' that Layton said she was subjected to.

Layton was quoted in earlier media reports as saying, "Without any warning, my life came crashing down around me.

"I was kicked out on the streets with only the clothes on my back."

Layton's palimony suit claimed that the women had shared a promise to "evenly share" property that the couple acquired during their years together, regarding that vow as a verbal contract.

In the year 2000, the two celebrated their wedding at New Hampshire's Mount Washington State Park, but eight years later the relationship came to an end.

Said Layton, "I was left an emotional wreck, with nothing to show for eight years of my life.

"I still suffer nightmares today. It's something I don't think I will ever properly recover from."

Added Layton, "But what I want now is justice. Justice for all those lost, wasted years."



Layton also wanted a portion of four properties the couple purchased in Florida, although that state's voters recently approved a constitutional amendment to bar marriage rights for gay and lesbian families.

But the enshrinement of anti-gay language in the state's bedrock law means that Layton's suit may not stand much chance if it goes forward as a straightforward palimony case. Her lawyer has gotten "creative" to get around that.

According to an Oct. 6 article at HeraldTribune.com, attorney Raymond Rafool has cast the women's life together as a business partnership as well as a personal one.

"In the law, that's what you have to do in Florida in order to receive fair compensation," the article quoted Rafool, a divorce lawyer who has handled celebrity breakups before, as saying.

If the case succeeds, it "could have very broad implications," the article quoted business partnership law expert and Stetson University College of Law visiting professor Bruce Carolan as saying.

The article said that Navratilova was not talking about the case publicly. According to her publicist, Navratilova has relocated from her Sarasota County, Florida, home; her attorney, Barry Greenberg, was quoted as saying, "We're taking the position this is a private matter and we're not going to be making any statements."

However, Greenberg had filed legal papers that dismissed the suit as a "thinly disguised action for palimony," the article said, contending from there that the suit was without merit since "neither gay marriage nor a cause of action for palimony is recognized by the State of Florida."

Under the anti-family amendment to the Florida constitution that voters approved last year, "no other legal union that is treated as marriage or the substantial equivalent thereof shall be valid or recognized" in the state, the article noted.

Navratilova had faced a similar palimony suit in 1991, the article noted. That case was settled out of court.

Navratilova was born in Prague, but defected to the U.S. in 1975. She became one of the great athletes of the 20th century, racking up a long and impressive record of wins, including nine victories at Wimbledon.

Navratilova became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1981, and came out as a lesbian that same year.

Navratilova is not the only tennis star to be sued by a former same-sex life partner for palimony. In 1981, Billie Jean King was slapped with a suit by Marilyn Barnett, with whom she had become romantically involved a decade earlier.



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