



December 4, 2013

USA Gymnastics

Attn: President and CEO Steve Penny

132 E. Washington Street

Suite 700

Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Mr. Penny:

Gymnastics is my passion. I began the sport at age four and over the next twelve years transformed into not just an athlete, but a gymnast. Those twelve years have shaped my life immeasurably and are a large part of who I am. I have played the role of athlete, spectator, reporter, fan, and coach throughout my life. I have had the opportunity to take in the full realm of the sport, as I have experienced it in various capacities and environments. I began coaching gymnastics because I wanted to share my love and passion for the sport with others and help them to grow from it as I have.

I truly believe that this sport transforms lives for the better and has endless boundaries of impact on its athletes. It is my belief that our job as coaches is to make young athletes realize their full potential and strive to live up to that potential. Unfortunately, my coaching experience the past two years opened my eyes to a very different side of the sport: a dark, unpleasant kind of gymnastics that I did not think existed. It was at Geddert's Twistars USA, under the employment of John and Kathryn Geddert, that my view of gymnastics was turned upside down.

I was ecstatic when I was first asked by John Geddert to work at Twistars. For almost two years I drove an hour to the gym and an hour home six days a week, just so I could work at what I thought was a gymnastics paradise. While I should have recognized problems earlier, my optimistic nature and love for high level talent kept me excusing certain behaviors. Eventually though, I was pushed to the breaking point. My morals and respect for the sport finally told me enough was enough.

I recognize that there are many different styles of coaching to be respected, but also believe that certain boundaries must exist for the well-being of the athletes we coach. I can say with certainty that John Geddert should not be allowed to coach gymnastics. I am truly concerned for the well-being of the athletes under his care. He coaches and lives in a narcissistic manner, attempting to control others by means of fear and intimidation. I have witnessed the use and abuse of multiple gymnasts under Geddert's care and have concerns for their bodies, health, interests, and overall psychosocial development. I have chosen to speak up not out of bitter resentment, but rather out of respect for the sport that I love and the gymnasts that deserve to have a positive experience with this sport. I would like to present you with my experiences and allow you to make your own judgment on what is happening in Dimondale, Michigan:

**02.2012** Level 10 gymnast [REDACTED] landed a double front on floor with straight legs, severely injuring her knee. John responded with anger and frustration, telling [REDACTED] that she was a "Fucking idiot" and that it didn't look that bad. As she sat out and iced, John continued to make rude remarks or glances at [REDACTED] for the remainder of the night.

**10.20.2012** During the staff picture, former Twistar and University of Florida gymnast [REDACTED] and I were asked to kneel in the front as we were the short ones. [REDACTED] was a gymnast for John that had returned after college to help coach at the gym. I was kneeling in front of Kathryn and [REDACTED] was kneeling in front of John. At this point John put his hand on [REDACTED] head, turned it toward him to face his private areas and loudly remarked "Oh yeah, just like that [REDACTED]" (her nickname). As everyone had a little chuckle I found it slightly inappropriate. As [REDACTED] and I had become good friends, we were talking about the incident a few minutes afterward. She said that although she was shocked, she was used to it as she had grown up in the gym and was raised with this behavior from John. Sadly, I knew exactly what she meant. While I probably would not have tolerated that particular comment had it been directed toward me, I have shrugged my shoulders at other very offensive sexual remarks by John. He is not shy to make these same type of remarks with the gymnasts he coaches either. Everyone is sort of accustomed to it and turns a blind eye in fear of what he may do if we were to respond differently.

**Saturday 10.2012** Level 10 gymnast [REDACTED] was having difficulties on bars and vault. John blatantly told her that it was because she was too fat. The only correction he would give her over and over was to lose weight. I watched her get continually upset for a few practices. Shortly after, a Saturday morning came when [REDACTED] was not at practice. We were told by John that she went to the hospital because she had troubles with mixing medications and were asked to remain quiet about the situation. As I did not feel it was my place to intervene I left it to her parents, doctors, and John to handle the situation. I have since learned much more of what happened from both [REDACTED] and her mother: [REDACTED] begged her parents not to go to practice that morning and not understanding what was going on, they told her no. She then took pills and wrote a note to her parents telling them she loved them. The next thing she remembers is her dad and the paramedics trying to shake her awake on the floor. When asked why she did this, she responded "Coach" repeatedly. [REDACTED] reportedly told them that the previous night at practice John had told her she would pay for what she did tomorrow (Saturday), which was why she did not want to go to practice. She told them that she took the pills because she just wanted it to all go away and she wanted to go to sleep. She was then sent to a psychiatric hospital and in isolation for a few days. Upon returning, a meeting was held with [REDACTED], her parents, John and Kathryn Geddert, and Larry Nassar in which they were pressured to keep things quiet so that John would not lose his reputation. [REDACTED] eventually left Twistars to train at R Athletics in Grand Rapids until she joined the Western Michigan University Gymnastics team months later. John has since sent [REDACTED] correspondence and attempted to ruin her reputation with the coach of Western Michigan University. Her parents are currently seeking an attorney and want to take care of the situation. They made it clear to me that they felt John had permanently tainted their daughter and pushed her to attempt to take her life. Her mother wants to "Take care of this monster so that he can't hurt anyone else mentally and physically", as she corresponded to me via text message.

**SUMMER 2013** John was upset with me regarding a fall scheduling email he sent out. He had asked for a timely response in order to organize things in the best possible manner. As I had to figure out my school schedule, carpooling, and various scheduling conflicts, I responded to him within two weeks. This made him very upset as he had wanted a more immediate response. In his frustration he chose to approach me while I was coaching. I was standing up on a high beam teaching the new compulsory routines to a group of young athletes around the ages of eight to ten. In front of the girls, he loudly yelled at me and vented his frustrations, calling me immature and irresponsible. He said that he was disappointed in me and could not believe I would act as such. I feel this was a very inappropriate method

of communication on his part. As a coach and authority figure it is difficult for me to maintain respect within a group of young athletes while being belittled by the owner of the facility. This situation could have been handled in a much more effective manner.

**SUMMER 2013** Shortly after the previous incident, in which John was disappointed and extremely rude to me, he made an attempt to smooth the air in a very awkward manner. Just days after he had yelled at and belittled me, he chose to smooth things over by commenting on how my tight pants looked nice from behind, but he would prefer less clothing. He said the less clothing I wore to the gym, the better. This was just one of many, many sexually harassing remarks. He often made me feel awkward in a sexual aspect and did not mind doing so with Kathryn around. Being a married, Christian woman I found this very distasteful and certainly inappropriate in the workplace. The team girls would sometimes even come to me to let me know how long John had been staring at my backside. Flattery is one thing; inappropriate sexual conduct from your boss is another.

**Saturday 09.21.13** It was the day of our annual Twistars Fall Mixer. The Fall Mixer is usually planned by members of the Booster Club and takes place at one of the gymnast's houses. The event is planned as an opportunity for bonding among team coaches, gymnasts, and parents. Upon arriving at this year's Fall Mixer, I was greeted by a group of six to eight young athletes. As I got out of my car I was immediately swarmed by the girls, saying "Hi [REDACTED], we are so glad you're here!! We have been waiting for you! John was drinking and driving!" I took a moment to collect myself and asked the girls what they were referring to. They led me over to John's Corvette and pointed to an open beer can in the middle console cup holder. I explained to the girls that he probably just went out to his car for something and set it there forgetting to bring it back in with him. To this they replied "No, it was there when he drove up and it was open!" I then glanced at it again, and although I could tell it was indeed a beer can, I quieted the girls telling them it was probably just root beer. The rest of the night, however, bothered me slightly. Among the ten staff that attended, there were three or four of us that really engaged with the gymnasts and parents. John and Kathryn, among other staff, sat around the campfire drinking continuously and smoking cigars. We were able to get John up to join in one activity, but that was it. While I realize this is not illegal by any means, I just feel it was not the right time or place for such things. I was stuck trying to defend John and other staff to a few young athletes questioning with "I didn't know John and [REDACTED] smoked?" Ten year olds do not understand the difference between smoking cigarettes and an occasional celebratory cigar. Perhaps the partying simply could have waited until after the team gathering when the staff went on to mingle elsewhere.

**Tuesday 10.15.13** John told gymnast [REDACTED], training level 8, to go in the level 10 locker room as he was upset with her for a particular conditioning assignment she had been doing. He followed her into the locker room and shut the door, placing himself and 11 year old [REDACTED] in the locker room alone. After a few minutes, both of them emerged from the locker room. [REDACTED] was visibly upset and crying uncontrollably. She then worked out with a level 4 group for the rest of the night. [REDACTED] told her teammates, grandmother, and me that while John was yelling at her in the locker room he stepped on her toes, grabbed her by the arm, and threw her up against the wall. Clearly the only two people that know for absolute certainty what occurred that night in the locker room are John Geddert and [REDACTED], which creates a his word vs. her word scenario. While I cannot be certain what took place in the room, I can be certain that I was and still am concerned about the events that night. I have watched John scream at, belittle, and punish almost every person in that gym at one point or another. He has done so in front of parents, gymnasts, coaches, and anyone that happened to be in the gym at the given time. Therefore, it struck me as particularly odd that he took [REDACTED] into the locker room that night to punish her rather than simply doing so out in the gym as he does with every other situation that arises. One of the older level 10 gymnasts that I carpool with who has been with Twistars for quite a few years, [REDACTED], had a response to the situation that I found interesting as well. That night during our carpool home, the girls were talking amongst themselves about the situation. When I asked [REDACTED] if she thought

John actually did what [REDACTED] had described, [REDACTED] responded with "I don't know, but he used to step on our toes so we couldn't run away from him when he was mad."

**Tuesday 11.05.13** This was the day that I planned to give John my notice and let him know that I would be leaving Twistars. I had originally planned to offer him eight weeks if necessary and thought that we could discuss an end date. Upon being hired I had signed an agreement stating that if I did not give eight week notice, I would be billed for certain trainings and various items. I sent John a text message asking to talk to him for a few minutes after practice. He responded telling me that before practice was better. When I got to the gym he motioned for me to talk to him in the downstairs staff room. I asked him if he was sure he wanted to do it before practice and in the staff room rather than upstairs in the office. He asked me if it was earth shattering news, to which I responded no, but it is important and I think the office may be a better place to talk. He said no, that he wanted to talk then and there. I began with "I have been struggling financially for a few months and it is just getting too hard to make this work. I know you are aware of all the car problems I have had. I just put \$400 on my car and it is already making noises and needs looked at again. I also share a car with [REDACTED] (my husband) and the 60 mile commute 6 days a week on top of both of our school schedules is becoming extremely difficult. I appreciate everything you and Kathryn have done for me and I am so thankful for the opportunities you have provided me, but unfortunately I am no longer able to do this. This has not been an easy decision, and of course leaving the girls has been the hardest part of it, but I have to be able to pay my bills." John was immediately upset and angry. He said that he did not understand how I could leave in the middle of the season. I explained to him that I was trying to let him know as soon as possible, before competition season began. I also said I wanted to let him know before he sent me to the Karolyi Ranch, instead of taking the opportunity to go to the ranch and then turning around and leaving Twistars (he had asked me the previous week if I wanted to go to TOPs National Team Camp December 5-7). He only replied with "This is why I ask everyone in April what their plans are for the season. Did you not learn anything from [REDACTED] leaving in the middle of the season? This is not a mature, responsible choice you are making. How can you just spit on the team and leave us high and dry in the middle of the season? What do you think I am supposed to do? I cannot believe you would be so selfish and think only about yourself." He then walked out of the staff room, leaving the conversation, and did not speak to me the rest of the night. After work the following text messages took place between John and I:

[REDACTED]-I would like to be the one to tell the girls...none of them know yet I wanted you to know first...but I would appreciate it if they could hear it from me

John-No But I expect you to keep it quiet until I can figure out a plan

[REDACTED]-No as in they are not allowed to hear it from me?

John-Yes

[REDACTED]-Why?

John-I do not want to text discuss this...But the answer is obvious. I would like to continue our conversation tomorrow

[REDACTED]-Okay sounds good....I have no problem with waiting to tell them until you can figure something out I just wanted them to hear it from me is all but we can continue the conversation tomorrow

**Thursday 11.07.13** Upon arriving at the gym I went to John's office to continue our discussion. I had hoped that we could go over more details as to when my last day would be and how the girls would find out. John started with saying that he was still trying to wrap his head around how I thought that

leaving in the middle of the season was a mature, responsible choice. He assured me that I would not be allowed to tell them, that he would tell them. He said "I will tell them you are leaving them, quitting on them, and abandoning them. That will be the end of the story. I do not want some big sob fest." After about five minutes of belittling me and acting in rage, he said I was dismissed and to get downstairs and coach. As I walked downstairs, I called my mother crying. My mother advised me to pick an end date that worked for me. She said that at this point I did not need to give him eight weeks; two weeks would be fine as I had attempted twice to discuss details professionally to which he did not cooperate. At this point I texted John that my last day would be November 26, giving him exactly three weeks from the day I had told him. He came downstairs as I was putting my staff shirt on and calming myself to coach. I then told him in the downstairs staff room that my last day would be the 26. He turned to look at me and angrily said "That is not eight weeks!" I told him I was aware of the agreement I had signed, was choosing to give him three weeks based on our two prior conversations, and asked him to please itemize a bill for whatever items would be deducted from my paycheck. He then screamed "If you are only giving three weeks then get out now! Get out of my gym...I want you gone NOW!" I asked him if he was sure that was what he wanted and he replied affirmatively. I gathered my belongings and began to leave. As I was walking out, he stopped me. At this point we were directly in front of the floor exercise where the team girls were stretching and warming up. Approximately two feet from the floor, with all the girls watching as I was crying, he motioned loudly to a nearby staff member "Hold up... [REDACTED], I want you to be a witness. She is quitting her job and just walking out on her job. You are a witness of this." To this I replied "[REDACTED], if you are going to be a witness of the situation I feel you should know the full truth. I gave John my three week notice as I am financially unable to continue at Twistars, at which point he kicked me out and asked me to leave his gym now. He has also questioned my character and told me I am irresponsible and immature for leaving. I am now leaving to respect his wishes." As I walked to the door John yelled "I want it on my desk, in writing, tonight." At this point I went up to the office, got a pen and paper, and began documenting the scenario. I had planned on making a copy to take with me and leaving the letter on his desk. Before I could finish writing, he came upstairs and motioned for me to come in his office. He then said that he was trying to make this go smoothly. I let him know that I had wanted to leave on good terms from the start but his actions were making that impossible and had conveyed otherwise. He then replied "I need you to stay tonight. [REDACTED] is gone. I want you to stay your three weeks. Short of buying you a new car what can I do to make you stay?" I asked him if he meant stay for three weeks, eight weeks, or permanently to which he responded eight weeks. After what had gone down and the way he handled the situation I told him that was not in the cards anymore. He responded with "That says a lot. I ask you what I can do to help and you say nothing. That says a lot about your character. I have been nothing but good to you and you don't care at all about me or this program. You are hurting hundreds of people." I told John that I care a great deal about the athletes and their families, but that I did not care about what he thought of me. I said to him that once he questioned my character, called me immature, irresponsible, and a bad role model I had lost all respect for him and this was why I no longer cared what he thought of me. I said he was entitled to feel however he wanted, but I was comfortable with who I was. I told him I would stay the three weeks, although he had just kicked me out, but only out of care and concern for the girls. I then went downstairs, calmed down, and returned to work. When leaving that day I wanted to make sure he wanted me to come back the next day, as I was unsure if he was just keeping me around that night because we were short a team staff member. He said "I don't know. I guess yeah, plan on coming tomorrow." At this point I felt completely unsure as to whether he would have me continue for three weeks or simply call me one day and say you're done, do not come in. For this reason, I chose to tell the girls myself. I had built a very strong relationship with the girls and felt that they deserved to hear it from me. I thought that if he was to not have me come in one day and simply tell them that I left with no explanation, they would be extremely hurt and feel much more abandoned. That night and the following day I broke the news to the girls. I simply told them that I could no longer coach in Lansing because it was too difficult financially, especially sharing one car with my husband. I let them know that I needed to find a job closer to home so I could afford to pay my bills. I told them it was not an easy decision and the hardest part was leaving them. I reassured them it had nothing to do with them and

that I wanted to stay in their lives. I asked them not to talk about it around the gym at practice, because John was not happy that I was leaving and I did not want them to get in trouble. I said I planned on my last day being November 26, but that he may ask me to leave sooner. They understood fairly well, as most of them had seen him kick me out of the gym the day before. That was all the information I gave them. They did well with not talking about it at the gym and trying to keep their emotions in tact in following practices, as I am sure they did not want to get in trouble either. Neither John nor Kathryn spoke to me for the next week, but I continued to come to work and figured that I would simply finish my three weeks if allowed, out of respect for the girls.

**Saturday 11.16.13** Upon noticing that my paycheck was substantially less than what I had expected, I sent Kathryn a text inquiring about the amount. John was now out of town at the Karolyi Ranch, so I sent the text to Kathryn instead while I was on my way to the gym. She responded, informing me that deductions had already been taken for my decision to give three weeks instead of eight. I told her that I was under the impression that I would know what the deductions were going to be before they were taken out and that I would get a bill for them prior to them being taken out of my paycheck. I also asked whether or not there would be further deductions. She did not respond as to whether or not there would be further deductions. At this point in time I realized that I was driving two hours every day and not even certain if I would be given an adequate paycheck. As I had stressed in my decision to leave, I was struggling financially. I thought that after attempting various times to professionally put in my notice with John and returning to work for him five minutes after he had disturbingly kicked me out, that perhaps he would have the decency to treat me with similar respect. I should have known better. At this point I was reassured by both of my parents that I no longer owed them anything. I had tried to make this a smooth, professional resignation and in turn was treated very poorly and unprofessionally. By clearly showing me that they did not want to handle this situation in a professional matter, I thought it was no longer necessary to give them my time and loyalty. Based on the actions and behaviors of the Gedderts the past week and a half, I realized that I should be prepared for the worst. Not knowing whether or not my paycheck would be held, I turned around and drove back home. I could no longer drive 120 miles a day and give my time and efforts for people that had treated me so unfairly and may not even pay me for my remaining work. My parents advised me to end contact with the Gedderts so I would no longer be harassed. Although it was shortly after practice had started, I sent Kathryn a text less than an hour after I had planned on being there letting her know that I would not be in. I then stopped any and all texting to John and Kathryn.

**Tuesday 11.19.13** I received this text from John:

“Whoops you missed it by a couple days... But then again I would expect nothing less from the immature and irresponsible. Very classy...You couldn't even be respectful enough to keep your self-centered excuses to yourself as requested. What a shame but very typical of the entitlement generation”

At this point I decided it was best to block John and Kathryn from Facebook as well, as I had noticed a post pertaining to me. If they wished to contact me from here on, it would need to be by email.

**Wednesday 11.20.13** I received a copy of an email from John that was addressed to “Twistars Girls Team Members.” John had put together an email addressing my departure and sent it to all of the team parents. The email was pure libel and told a story that could not be further from the truth. He used quotations to quote me directly with things I never said. Through libel, slander, and complete defamation of character he degraded me to the entire team. He had no trouble, however, using false information to make himself look better.

John Geddert has since instructed many of the team parents that they are not to let their children see me in groups. He told them he would prefer they shut me out completely, but if they must keep in contact it is not to be in a group setting. Some of the parents planned a going away dinner for me and then cancelled

it, telling me that they were afraid of what he would do to their girls if they were to socialize with me in a group setting. He continues to put fear into not only the gymnasts, but their families as well. I have no control, nor do I wish to, over what each family decides is best for their gymnast. I do not want the girls to have to choose between John and myself or be involved in any of the drama. Sharing these accounts with you is not meant in any way to resolve the drama or problems between myself, the athletes, the Gedderts, or anyone else. I am sharing these accounts with you because I know that what goes on behind closed doors at Gedderts Twistars USA should not be allowed.

As both a gymnast and coach I have been a very proud member of USA Gymnastics for many years. The program and all its entities have put our country at the top of this sport. I was a Region Five national competitor from Gym America in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I spent nine years attending the University of Michigan Women's Gymnastics Camp and grew up with close ties to the University of Michigan Women's Gymnastics Program. I spent four years attending International Gymnastics Camp in Pennsylvania. I have coached in three different states at various levels. I may not be the Olympic Head Coach, but I have seen my fair share of gymnastics. I have had the opportunity to be coached by, and to coach among some of the nation's finest coaches. I have been exposed to numerous coaching styles, techniques, and personalities. Each of these has instilled and continuously reaffirmed my faith and pride in USA Gymnastics. John Geddert is the exception. He is a ticking time bomb and a poor representation of what USA Gymnastics stands for. It would be a shame for one individual to ruin the prestige of USA gymnastics; a program that athletes, coaches, and supporters across the country work hard to represent with integrity and honor.

I appreciate your time and consideration in this matter. Please feel free to contact me with questions or for copies of any texts/emails that you may wish to see regarding this situation. Again, I am proud and grateful to be a member of such an outstanding organization.

Thank you,

[REDACTED]