

Sex offender drops lawsuit

By Jane Musgrave
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WEST PALM BEACH — Billionaire sex offender Jeffrey Epstein has dropped his lawsuit against convicted Fort Lauderdale Ponzi schemer Scott Rothstein and one of the disbarred lawyer's former associates.

Since Rothstein is serving a 50-year sentence for bilking investors out of \$1.2 billion, the focus of Epstein's lawsuit has long been attorney Bradley Edwards.

The Fort Lauderdale lawyer, who worked at Rothstein's now-defunct firm, became Epstein's nemesis when he filed civil suits on behalf of five women who claimed Epstein sexually exploited them at his Palm Beach mansion when some were as young as 14.

While Epstein ultimately settled the suits, along with roughly two dozen more filed by other women, he claimed Edwards trumped up the allegations to perpetuate Rothstein's fraud.

As part of his scheme, Rothstein would falsely tell potential investors that he had reached large settlements in various lawsuits and they could share in the riches.

In the 2009 lawsuit, Epstein said Rothstein falsely claimed he had gotten the billionaire financial manager to agree to settle the women's lawsuits for as much as \$200 million.

Despite three years of trying, Epstein never produced any evidence to shore up his allegations, said attorney Jack Scarola,



Billionaire Jeffrey Epstein sued a convicted Ponzi schemer and a lawyer.

who represents Edwards.

Epstein dropped the claims against Edwards on Thursday, a day before Scarola was going to ask a judge to throw out the suit.

"He filed these baseless, scurrilous claims for the purpose of trying to extort Mr. Edwards into abandoning the lawsuits on behalf of Mr. Epstein's young victims," Scarola said.

Attorney Tonja Haddad Coleman, who represents Epstein, didn't return a phone call for comment.

Scarola said the legal battle isn't over. Edwards will pursue claims against Epstein for malicious prosecution and abuse of process. He is seeking punitive damages that could run into the millions.

As part of a controversial non-prosecution agreement, federal prosecutors in 2008 agreed not to file charges against Epstein after dozens of women complained he had lured them to his mansion for sex. In exchange, he pleaded guilty in state court to two prostitution-related charges.

He served 13 months of an 18-month sentence. He also agreed to pay for an attorney to represent more than 30 women who claimed he paid them for sex when they were minors.

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