

Pepperdine University Sues Netflix Over New Mindy Kaling Show

Mary Whitfill Roeloffs

Forbes Staff

Mary Roeloffs is a Forbes breaking news reporter covering pop culture.

Follow

Pepperdine University has sued Netflix and Warner Bros. over a new comedy series from writer and executive producer Mindy Kaling, called “Running Point,” claiming the show “misappropriated” its NCAA basketball team by using its name, team colors and the No. 37, the jersey number worn by the school’s mascot.



Brenda Song as Ali and Kate Hudson as Isla Gordon.

KATRINA MARCINOWSKI/NETFLIX © 2024

KEY FACTS

Pepperdine University has sued Netflix and Warner Bros. in California federal court accusing them of trademark infringement, misappropriation and false advertising, amid other claims, alleging the show purposefully made its fictional basketball team strongly resemble that of the university.

“Running Point” is a comedy that sees a party girl, played by Kate Hudson, inherit her family’s fictional NBA team called the Los Angeles Waves, which shares a name and “strikingly similar logos, branding and colors” to Pepperdine’s Division I men’s team, the lawsuit claims.

The show also features a player with the jersey number “37,” the same one worn by the school’s mascot, promoted on team merchandise and widely associated with Pepperdine, the school says, because of its founding in 1937. Pepperdine’s lawsuit says it owns several registered trademarks protecting the name, brand and reputation of the Waves, and that use of such similar branding by the show will confuse the public into believing “Running Point” is associated with the university.

In its complaint, Pepperdine—which is a private Christian university—calls “Running Point” a “raunchy” series and says it promotes themes that aren’t in line with the university’s values, including alcohol and substance use, sexual innuendo and imagery and foul language.

The lawsuit asks the court for “injunctive relief to prevent further use of Pepperdine’s trademarks” and for an unspecified amount in monetary damages.

Representatives for Netflix and Warner Bros did not immediately respond to Forbes’ request for comment Friday (Kaling, Hudson and other individuals are not named as defendants).



Kate Hudson as Isla Gordon.

KAT MARCINOWSKI/NETFLIX 2024

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

If the lawsuit will delay the release of the show or force any on-screen changes. The comedy series is set to debut on Netflix Feb. 27.

KEY BACKGROUND

Kaling, who is behind the popular comedy series "The Mindy Project," "Never Have I Ever" and "The Sex Lives of College Girls," wrote and executive produced "Running Point" with Ike Barinholtz and David Stassen. Hudson, Howard Klein and two high-up Los Angeles Lakers executives—president and co-owner Jeanie Buss and manager of special projects Linda Rambis—are also executive producers. The show stars Hudson as Isla Gordon, who is unexpectedly appointed as the new owner of her family's professional basketball team. The only girl in a family of brothers, she sets off to prove herself in the male-dominated world of sports with the help of her fiancé (played by Max Greenfield of "New Girl") and a high-level team staffer played by Brenda Song (best known for her time on Disney Channel as a teenager).

FURTHER READING

'Zero Day' Netflix Cast And Creators Discuss Real Cyberattack Dangers By Jeff Conway