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## Deposed U.S. taekwondo coach sues Olympic groups

### Advertiser Staff

Dae Sung Lee, who was removed as U.S. Olympic taekwondo coach in April, has filed a \$1 million federal lawsuit against the sport's governing body and Olympic committee, claiming he was removed because of his Korean heritage.

Lee's attorney, Ward D. Jones of the firm Bervar & Jones, said Lee will seek reinstatement to the position in time for the Olympic Games, as well as unspecified compensatory damages and punitive damages in the suit filed against the United States Taekwondo Union and United States Olympic Committee.

No one with the U.S. Taekwondo Union nor the U.S. Olympic Committee could be reached for comment yesterday.

The Olympic Games in Athens will be held Aug. 13 to 29, with the taekwondo competition being held Aug. 26.



Dae Sung Lee

The suit was filed yesterday in U.S. District Court and Jones said he will be asking for an accelerated hearing.

"I'm just waiting patiently for the court's decision," Lee said yesterday. "They (U.S. Taekwondo Union and U.S. Olympic Committee) really did wrong. If you look at my resumé, I'm pretty good at coaching."

Jones said following Lee's removal, the position remained open until July 19.

"He was told July 19 someone else got the job," Jones said.

Jones said in October of 2003, the U.S. Olympic Committee approved the nomination of Lee as the team's coach. Lee was an uncertified coach on the 2000 Olympic team and coached the U.S. Pan American team last year.

According to Jones, a new management group assumed control of the sport's governing body — U.S. Taekwondo Union — in February and removed all Korean Americans (10 in all) from management.

The U.S. Taekwondo Union oversees 30,000 members nationally, including coaches and competitors.

Jones said the new group also removed each state president; of those, 23 were Korean Americans.

Lee, a local instructor and owner of the U.S. Taekwondo Center in 'Aina Haina, said he hasn't told many students about his situation.

"Just a handful of students know," Lee said. "Probably, after today, now everybody will know."

Lee, who will turn 46 a week before the opening ceremonies in Athens, was born in Seoul, Korea and moved to Hawai'i in 1971. He is a Moanalua High School and University of Hawai'i alum.

Lee is a nine-time U.S. national champion and four-time gold medalist at the Pan American taekwondo championships.

In 1993, he opened the U.S. Taekwondo Center, where he coaches about 300 students.