

How the Elite Scumbag Bosses At Stanford University Got Busted For Selling Snootiness

By [Joel Rubin](#), [Matthew Ormseth](#), [Suhauna Hussain](#) and [Richard Winton](#)



Morrie Tobin was the suspected ringleader of a stock scam. (Morrie Tobin)

Morrie Tobin was in Boston to cut the deal of his life.

It was early April last year. A few weeks before, federal agents had descended on the multimillion-dollar home Tobin shares with his wife and some of their six children in Hancock Park, a moneyed Los Angeles enclave.

Warrant in hand, the agents searched the French chateau-style mansion for financial records and other evidence to nail Tobin, the suspected ringleader of a stock scam that defrauded investors of millions of dollars.

The raid imploded Tobin's very comfortable life. Faced with the prospect of years in prison and a seven-figure fine, the businessman flew to Boston to meet with the federal prosecutors handling the case. He was looking for mercy.

They offered him a standard deal: Come clean about the con job he had run on investors and, in the end, he might get some leniency.

But Tobin, 55, had something else to offer up — a nugget of information that had nothing to do with stock markets.

He hoped it would interest prosecutors and tip the scales a bit further in his favor.

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[How the largest college admissions scandal ever let wealthy parents cheat the system](#)

Mar 13, 2019 | 6:20 AM

When Andrew Lelling, the U.S. Attorney for Massachusetts, unveiled a [sweeping investigation](#) into a college admissions cheating scam earlier this month, he made a cryptic reference to how his investigators had uncovered the alleged conspiracy.

“Our first lead in this came during interviews with a target of an entirely separate investigation, who gave us a tip that this activity might be going on,” he said.

The tip led investigators to a soccer coach at Yale University, who, in turn, pointed them to William “Rick” Singer, the college admissions consultant who would confess to be the mastermind of the admissions racket. With Singer’s cooperation, FBI agents set about building cases against dozens of the wealthy parents on his client list as well as people at universities across the country Singer allegedly paid to help students cheat their way into school. Prosecutors needed less than a year from that first tip to file criminal charges, a remarkably quick turnaround for a case so large and with such high stakes.

In all, [50 people have been charged](#) — including 33 parents, several college coaches, a man Singer paid to take college admission exams for students and Singer himself, who pleaded guilty to several felonies in a deal with prosecutors. The investigation is ongoing and prosecutors indicated in court last week that more people are likely to be charged.

Not included in the pool of defendants, however, is Tobin, whom multiple law enforcement officials and a person close to him identified as the unnamed tipster Lelling credited with setting the investigation in motion.

At a court hearing last week, a prosecutor alleged that Tobin, whom he referred to by an anonymous moniker, was not innocent in the admissions shenanigans. “Individual A,” he said, paid bribes in an effort to get one of his daughters into Yale.

[Full coverage: Dozens charged in connection with college admissions scheme »](#)

A financial executive with his roots in the Montreal suburb Côte-Saint-Luc, Tobin took to social media in recent months to paint a self-portrait that stands in contrast to the behavior that put him in the government’s crosshairs. In videos posted on Twitter, he spoke about volunteering with the Los Angeles Mission, a homeless shelter. He described himself as a “#Social Entrepreneur” and a “#ProudVolunteer” in a Feb. 5 tweet.

Tobin’s role in kicking off the investigation, which was first reported by the Wall Street Journal, is one in an array of enticing details disclosed in court hearings, documents and interviews that together

explain how a team of prosecutors working with FBI and IRS agents pieced together an investigation that has rattled the rarefied worlds of the rich and powerful in L.A., the Bay Area, and the East Coast in which Singer peddled his services. The case has also revealed how Singer and his collaborators exploited weaknesses in the processes some of the most competitive colleges in the country use to admit students.

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[Judge questions — but accepts — plea deal for ex-Yale coach in college admissions scheme](#)

Mar 28, 2019 | 4:55 PM

By the time Tobin crossed paths with Rudy Meredith, the women’s soccer coach at Yale, in the summer of 2017, both men were already well down their own roads of crime.

Tobin’s fraud had begun a few years before, when he and some business partners launched a classic pump-and-dump stock scam, in which they fooled investors into paying inflated prices for shares in two companies secretly controlled by Tobin, according to a complaint by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The group ran a fake promotional campaign to stoke investor interest and then orchestrated the sale of millions of dollars’ worth of Tobin’s shares to look like normal trades on stock exchanges, according to the complaint.

Federal authorities in Massachusetts got wind of the operation and opened an investigation, claiming jurisdiction because some of the investors lived in the state.

Meredith, meanwhile, met Singer in 2015 and joined his illicit network of coaches and college administrators, court filings made by the government in Meredith’s criminal case show. Singer relied on this group for what he told deep-pocketed families was a “side-door” he had built into some of the country’s most sought after universities.

To access the side door, parents were instructed to make a six-figure donation to a charity Singer ran, according to an affidavit filed by an FBI agent in the case. Singer then used some of the money to bribe a coach at the chosen school, who would give the student one of the slots reserved for athletes who the coach wanted to recruit for his or her team. To make the ruse convincing, Singer had an accomplice compile bogus athletic dossiers that were full of fabricated accomplishments and doctored photos purporting to show the teen competing in the coach’s sport.

Meredith, who was a successful and respected coach for more than two decades at Yale, is accused of taking at least \$860,000 in bribes from Singer between 2015 and last year. Prosecutors have not detailed how many students he sneaked into Yale at Singer’s behest, but at a court hearing Thursday,

in which Meredith pleaded guilty to fraud and conspiracy charges, prosecutors said the money was “for multiple students.”

And in Meredith, Tobin saw a sure-fire way to get his high school-aged daughter into Yale when she finished at Marlborough School, a private all-girls school in Hancock Park. The Ivy League institution loomed large in the Tobin house: Two older sisters were enrolled at the time Tobin made his pact with Meredith and a third had already graduated. Tobin himself had played hockey at Yale in the early 1980s, but left before graduating, transferring out to play at the University of Vermont.

Neither of the men, nor their attorneys, responded to repeated requests for comment. No one answered the door on a recent afternoon at Tobin’s home in Los Angeles.

They agreed Tobin would pay in “the mid-six figures” for Meredith to designate the girl as a player he wanted on his soccer team and Tobin began paying monthly installments to the coach, according to an affidavit an agent filed in the case and comments a prosecutor made at the court hearing last week.

There would have been time to make about seven or eight of the payments. Then, in March last year agents raided Tobin’s house.

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[Responding to college admissions scandal, California lawmakers propose sweeping reforms](#)

Mar 28, 2019 | 3:50 PM

Tobin unloaded what he knew about his stock scheme and his arrangement with Meredith during a “multi-day proffer,” a prosecutor told the judge at Meredith’s plea hearing. In proffer sessions, the target of a criminal investigation is given a limited amount of immunity or a plea agreement in exchange for information.

When he was done, prosecutors hatched a plan.

Tobin contacted Meredith, and the men agreed to meet at a hotel in Boston to discuss their arrangement. Before Meredith showed up for the April 12 meeting, FBI agents wired the room with hidden video cameras.

During the meeting, the men finalized the bribe at \$450,000, according to court records. Tobin gave Meredith \$2,000 in cash toward his balance and the coach told Tobin of a bank account where he wanted the remaining money to be sent, the records show. Days later, agents would wire Meredith \$4,000 from a Massachusetts bank account controlled by the FBI.

But, during the meeting, Meredith also got to talking about a man in his orbit. It was a name agents

had never heard before.

He "mentioned an individual named Rick Singer," a prosecutor said in court last week, adding that the government was completely in the dark about the man and the conspiracy he was running. "It wasn't on our radar. We learned about it through Mr. Meredith."

Three weeks after wiring Meredith the \$4,000, FBI agents listened in for the first time as Meredith spoke on the phone with Singer. Singer was lobbying Meredith to help him enlist other college coaches in the side-door scheme. He gave him talking points for assuaging the coaches' concerns, according to an FBI affidavit.

"You can say he's doing it at, for this year I did [seven elite schools]," Singer told him, according to a transcript of the call in an affidavit filed in court by the FBI. "We've done it everywhere."

Later in the call, Singer added: "You can tell them I did 760 of these this year, 96 the year before," in an apparent reference to the number of students he got into schools through his side-door. There has been no evidence made public to support these claims.



[College admissions scandal generated disgust and outrage. But what exactly was the crime?](#)

Mar 23, 2019 | 6:00 AM

Within weeks, prosecutors had received permission from a judge to begin tapping Singer's phones.

There was no shortage of interesting calls. In one of the first they heard, agents listened as Singer explained to Gordon Caplan, a high-powered private equity attorney in New York, how, for \$75,000, he could arrange for an expert test-taker to take a college entrance exam for Caplan's daughter.

"What we do is we help the wealthiest families in the U.S. get their kids into school," Singer said, according to the affidavit. "They want guarantees, they want this thing done. They don't want to be messing around with this thing. And so they want in at certain schools."

Agents were still listening a few months later in August, when Singer walked Bill McGlashan, a founder of an investment firm and major figure in Silicon Valley, through his alleged plan to get his son into the University of Southern California by pretending he was an accomplished football kicker.

"So I'm gonna make him a kicker," the affidavit transcripts show Singer said.

"He does have really strong legs," McGlashan responded. "Maybe he'll become a kicker. You never know. ...You could inspire him. You may actually turn him into something. I love it." The affidavit notes McGlashan was laughing.

McGlashan's attorneys disputed that account in court Friday.

By late September, agents had heard enough and were ready to confront Singer. When they did, he flipped, agreeing to cooperate with the investigation, the affidavit shows.

But he soon backtracked, secretly approaching several parents, including McGlashan, in an effort to warn them he had been caught.

Singer eventually came clean with agents and, after being slapped with an additional charge of obstruction of justice, went back to work for the government, according to the affidavit. In October, agents flew him to Boston to help them nail down the cases against the parents.

One after the other, Singer called parents who had allegedly hired him. Under the watchful eye of agents, who were recording the calls, Singer lied, saying the IRS was auditing his foundation. He was calling, he told the parents, to make sure they were clear what they should say in case the IRS inquired about the payments they had made. In the calls, Singer made sure to say explicitly what deals he and the parents had struck so prosecutors could use the exchanges against the parents in court.

"I just want to make sure that you and I are on the same page," he told a mother, according to the transcripts. "Cause, of course, I'm not gonna tell the IRS that — that, you know, you paid 15,000 ... to take the test for [your son], obviously. So I just wanted to make sure that you and I are on the same page, in case you get a call."

"Okay, so if I get a call," the mother asked.

"You're gonna say that the — the \$15,000 that you paid to our foundation was to help underserved kids," Singer instructed.

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[The legal way the rich get their kids into elite colleges: Huge donations for years](#)

Mar 22, 2019 | 9:10 AM

On a day in November, Meredith, who also had been cooperating with the government, abruptly resigned from his coaching job at Yale, saying in a statement that "it is time to explore new possibilities and begin a different chapter in my life."

The next day, the university received a federal grand jury subpoena for records on Meredith. Accompanying the subpoena was a judge's order instructing university officials to keep quiet about the case.

In February, Tobin quietly pleaded guilty in a Boston courtroom to securities fraud and a conspiracy charge stemming from the stock scam. Sentencing guidelines that judges use when deciding punishments indicate he faces somewhere between eight and 10 years behind bars, court records show.

For his cooperation, prosecutors have agreed to ask the judge in the case to sentence Tobin to the low end of that range. His plea deal also requires Tobin to forfeit \$4 million to the government.

And in the college admissions scandal Tobin uncovered, Singer, Meredith and a former sailing coach at Stanford have pleaded guilty, while the man who took exams for students has announced he will do the same.

So far, all the others have maintained their innocence.

Staff writer Del Quentin Wilber contributed to this report.



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