

NBA star in Sarasota court over child support

Lawyers for both sides want to close court and its record to the public



Tracy McGrady's lawyers have challenged Pearl Vega's claim.

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SARASOTA -- Basketball star Tracy McGrady of the Houston Rockets spent the past two days in a Sarasota County courtroom battling a Bradenton woman over how much child support he should give her.

Attorneys for Pearl Vega, 35, say McGrady should pay child support for their daughter in line with his NBA lifestyle and \$21.6 million annual income.

McGrady's attorneys say in court records that the claim is more about the mother's "desire for a high lifestyle rather than any reasonable needs of a minor child."

Attempts to settle the dispute have failed.

But both sides agreed on one thing Wednesday -- the trial should be held in secret and the court records for the case should be sealed.

They made the joint request to Circuit Judge Donna Berlin after a Herald-Tribune reporter entered the courtroom to watch the testimony.

McGrady's attorney, Mark Sessums, said in court that the case should be kept secret because it includes "extraneous matters" that if released would be "injurious to both parties."

Sessums said the issues include possible trade secrets buried in McGrady's endorsement contracts, and the privacy of the child, who was born out of wedlock in November 2005.

Berlin stopped the trial until she rules on the motion to close the courtroom and the case files.

McGrady's attorneys warn in court documents that even Vega's attorneys said the case could become a media circus. Their requests led a judge to grant a confidentiality order to protect some of his financial information from public view.

McGrady, of Texas, made \$21.6 million in 2005 while Vega made \$32,971, according to McGrady's financial affidavit filed in the case.

McGrady, 28, a six-time NBA All-Star who twice led the league in season scoring, also has a daughter and son with his wife, CleRenda. He married her in Mexico in September after dating for 10 years, People magazine reported.

He was born in Bartow and once played for the Orlando Magic. He was on the cover of the NBA Live '07 video game and his jersey is among the top sellers in the league.