

## **Steroids Case Gains Strength**

Elaine Sorrells was first and foremost a businesswoman, and her only connection to the Oasis Longevity & Rejuvenation Center was that of an "investor," a spokeswoman hired by Oasis told The Courant in the fall of 2005.

That the Florida-based Oasis was an Internet portal to the same powerful steroids linked to baseball star Rafael Palmeiro and other sluggers was no cause for alarm. Once you were signed up, sight unseen, for testosterone therapy at Oasis, it was no different than getting prescription medication from your family doctor, the spokeswoman insisted.

But The Courant's series on black-market Internet steroids in November 2005 pierced that veil of legitimacy, and now, with the unsealing of indictments Thursday against Sorrells and her sister, law officers pursuing a widening investigation out of Albany say they've blown that facade away.

Prosecutors in Albany have linked Oasis to Signature Pharmacy of Orlando, Fla., which is at the center of an investigation into illegal sales of steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs.

Thursday's arraignments nearly complete the list of more than 20 people on a flow chart provided by Albany County District Attorney David Soares that shows Signature at its center, and in its orbit, principals or employees of Oasis of Delray Beach; MedXlife.com of Orlando; Palm Beach Rejuvenation of Jupiter, Fla.; Infinity Rejuvenation of Deerfield Beach, Fla.; CNA of Sugarland, Texas; Anti-Aging Centers of Nanuet, N.Y.; and Omni Healthcare of Forest Hills, N.Y.

Sorrells, 37, of Boynton Beach, Fla., and her sister, Courtney Sorrells-Loceff, 30, of Port St. Lucie, Fla., were charged in eight-count indictments with conspiracy, attempted criminal sale of a controlled substance and criminal diversion of prescription medication. The charges are felonies.

The sisters pleaded not guilty in Albany County Court on Thursday and were released on bail of \$10,000.

Oasis Longevity shared an office with a debt-consolidation company on the fifth floor of a building on East Linton Boulevard in Delray Beach. Sorrells was listed in Florida business records as the president of both Oasis and the loan company, American Liberty Financial Inc.

Her lawyer in Albany, Michael Rhodes-Devey, did not return a telephone message seeking comment Thursday afternoon.

Meanwhile, the attorney for Sorrells-Loceff said his client "was definitely not involved with the day-to-day operation or anything to do with the administration of Oasis."

"She was briefly the vice president, but only on paper, and only because her sister needed someone to be vice president," said lawyer Thomas Carr of Albany. "In fact, she worked for Home Depot. She never saw, and never knew, any doctors or anyone who worked for Oasis."

Named in the same eight-count indictment as Sorrells and her sister is a man named A.J. Peterson, described by prosecutors as supervisor of the daily operations at Oasis.

Soares said Oasis Longevity had offered an investigator posing as an Internet doctor \$5,000 a week to write prescriptions for patients he never saw.

Steroids ordered and prescribed through Oasis and the other Internet sites were distributed nationally through Signature Pharmacy, prosecutors allege. The New York investigation is an attempt to cut off the flow to that state, Soares said.

"My goal here is to eliminate a major source, a major supply coming into my county and other parts of the state," Soares said after 11 arraignments last week in Albany, only days after raids at Signature in Orlando.

Soares has also said his focus is not on customers but on distributors of illicit steroids and human growth hormone and on doctors writing prescriptions to ship the drugs to patients they've never seen.

The 20 defendants arrested so far have pleaded not guilty.