Owner of French football club Angers jailed for sexual assault

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The former chairman and current owner of SCO Angers football club (L2), Said Chabane's lawyers Bernard Benaiem (L), and Pascal Rouiller, talk to journalists after the verdict in Chabane's case over sexual agression charges, at Angers' courthouse on March 22, 2024. - Said Chabane, who was not present, was sentenced by the city's criminal court to two years in prison, one suspended, for sexual assault. (Photo by LOIC VENANCE / AFP)  
  
  
  
Said Chabane, owner of French football club Angers, on Friday received a two-year jail term, with one year suspended, for sexually assaulting six female employees.  
  
  
  
Chabane was tried in western France for sexual assault “committed by a person abusing the authority conferred on him by his position”.  
  
The 59-year-old, who denied the charges, was given “the benefit of the doubt” relating to a seventh case.  
  
His lawyers said he would appeal the conviction.  
  
Chabane had been one of the driving forces behind Angers’ spectacular sporting recovery, including a return to Ligue 1 in 2015 after a two-decade absence.  
  
He described himself as a man who “started from nothing”, a “demanding” and “authoritative” employer but one who had never had a “dominant” relationship with his staff.  
  
  
  
The club, which he has owned since 2011, was relegated to Ligue 2 at the end of the 2022/2023 season. He handed over the club presidency to his son Romain in March 2023.  
  
Prosecutors had requested three years in prison, one suspended, describing the “unacceptable” behaviour the women had endured at his hands over the years.  
  
Former employees of Angers football club and Chabane’s cold cuts business told the court how they had been subjected to forced hugs and touching of their buttocks and chests.  
  
The first complaint was filed in January 2020 by a club employee after returning from a business trip to Madrid weeks earlier.  
  
Six others then came forward with complaints spanning from 2014 to 2019.  
  
Chabane will be tried in another case from Monday in the Paris region, for the illegal exercise of the activity of sports agent and money laundering as part of an organised gang, alongside four others. All deny the charges.