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Robertson Hazing Investigated

Police say as many as 12 football players could face charges

By Vic Vela and Phil Parker Journal Staff Writers

As many as eight boys were victims of hazing during a Robertson High School football camp last week outside Las Vegas, N.M., and up to 12 players could face charges, a State Police captain said Monday.

And the State Police confirmed that investigators are looking into allegations that one player was sodomized with a broomstick while pinned down.

"We are aware of that possibly occurring and after our investigation we think that may have happened," said Capt. Robert Shilling of the State Police Investigations Bureau.

Shilling said the possible broomstick rape was "the most serious allegation" that police are investigating.

The mother of one of the alleged victims told KOAT-TV news last week that her son was held down and penetrated with a broomstick more than once and that a coach walked in during the assault, "gave a smirk" and left.

Shilling said he didn't know if investigators were looking into whether Robertson coaches knew about the hazing or alleged assaults during a four-day, overnight training camp northwest of Las Vegas.

Las Vegas City Schools Superintendent Rick Romero said Friday that it appeared that some of allegations were false, although it also appeared that some kind of hazing did occur in which players were held down against their will. No arrests have been made.

Six players have been suspended from the Cardinals team. Shilling said all of the potential suspects are under the age of 18. The range for the numbers of players who are suspects is between eight and 12 while the range of possible victims is between six and eight, Shilling said.

Also, Robertson's entire football coaching staff has been placed on leave, including head coach Ray Woods, as well as athletic director Mike Yara. A temporary coaching crew, including longtime wrestling coach Richard Martinez, put the team through practice at Robertson Monday afternoon.

Shilling said investigators are expected to meet with representatives of the District Attorney's Office in Las Vegas today to seek "guidance" on potential charges.

"Whenever we are dealing with juveniles or crimes against children, we try to get the DA's Office involved," he said. "We'll know a lot more at that time as to how we proceed."

Shilling said the range of charges police are considering includes assault, battery, criminal sexual contact and criminal sexual penetration. About 50 players as well as coaches and chaperones have been interviewed by State Police, Shilling said.

During Monday's practice, a small group of Robertson players' parents sat together in the bleachers. It was the first practice since the hazing allegations became public Friday.

One player's father said the stories of alleged sexual assault and hazing have deeply affected the Las Vegas community.

"In our minds and our kids' minds this is a tragedy," he said. "The seniors are feeling bad about this. It's a black eye for them because a select few went above and beyond what's OK. All this team's hard work is put in jeopardy because of six kids who did something stupid."

Monday also was the first day of the school year at Robertson, and two Las Vegas policemen were on campus. Superintendent Romero said the officers were there to ensure a safe environment.

"Our principal met with the staff and there's a support staff available for students as they are learning about what has transpired," he said.

Romero said Robertson principal Richard Lopez, who assumed the duties of athletics director with the suspension of Yara, gave only brief consideration to cancelling any practices.



KATHARINE KIMBALL/JOURNAL Robertson returned to practice Monday with a temporary coaching staff. Six Cardinals have been suspended.