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## **In Darien's Latest Pre-Turkey Bowl Fiasco: How Police Say Juvenile Trash Talk Led to Adult Arrests**

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The assault of a New Canaan juvenile this month that resulted in the [arrests of three Darien teenagers](#) began with “hostile” and “antagonistic” trash-talking between high school students through text and Snapchat, court documents show.

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The evening started when the juvenile victim, hanging out with three friends at one of their houses, received an invite to the Old Kings Highway, New Canaan home to watch a movie. The juvenile began texting and “chirping” via Snapchat with a Darien acquaintance there.

#### **Juvenile Insults**

According to arrest warrant applications from New Canaan Police, citing sworn statements and interviews with a handful of teens present at an Old Kings Highway gathering that would be crashed by the Darienites, those communications included talk “how about how Darien High sucks and New Canaan High is better.”

The exchanges escalated — one of them included a photo of 18-year-old Darien resident Jack Joyce’s middle finger — followed by a text from the Darien High School senior saying “It’s Joyce” and “We’re coming.”

They did.

It was about 11:15 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 6, and though the victim had told Joyce not to come to the house, even lying that he was not there, “a carload of Darien kids” arrived, “came storming downstairs” and two to four kids grabbed the juvenile while fellow senior Brian Minicus put him in a headlock and punched his face about 12 times, according to the arrest warrant applications.

When the assault had ended, the boy iced his face and the Darien kids were “yelling violently and talking dirty,” according to the arrest warrant applications.

Police learned about the incident the following day, when the New Canaan boy arrived at department headquarters with his father.

After an extensive investigation, police obtained warrants signed by a prosecutor and judge, and charged Minicus with third-degree assault and second-degree unlawful restraint, charged Joyce with disorderly conduct and interfering with an officer, and charged a 17-year-old with conspiracy to commit third-degree assault and second-degree unlawful restraint. Police withheld the name of the third offender because of his age.

With both Joyce and Minicus starring on the then-unbeaten Blue Wave football team, news of the arrests on the eve of the Turkey Bowl spread quickly through the New Canaan and Darien communities. Neither would play in the annual Thanksgiving morning game, which [the Rams won 27-0](#).

As the assault unfolded, “the Darien kids were yelling and would not leave for approximately 15-20 minutes,” according to one witness cited by police in the arrest warrant application.

The same witness “saw Joyce come downstairs” where the New Canaan kids were congregated in the basement of the Old Kings Highway home “and get into the face” of a juvenile there, the application said.

**Joyce's Account**

During an interview with New Canaan police, and accompanied by an attorney, Joyce described a different scene.

According to Joyce, the 17-year-old Darienite who also was arrested had been to the house before and led the group downstairs “where he [Joyce] immediately went to the right to talk to New Canaan kids he knew through football.”

Joyce “stated he then looked to his left and saw Minicus punch” the juvenile, leaving shortly thereafter.

“Joyce denied being anywhere near Minicus and [the juvenile] and maintained he was talking with” someone else while at the party, according to the New Canaan police arrest warrant application.

When the officer asked Joyce “if he remembered being aggressive and yelling” at the party, “[Joyce] stated he did not remember.”

“Joyce then said he recalled everyone yelling at them to leave so he was yelling back” and asserted that “he did not touch anyone at the party,” the application said.

“It should be noted Joyce also denied sending [the juvenile] any texts with the exception of one picture of his middle finger which he sent earlier in the evening in response to [the juvenile] sending him a picture of his middle finger,” the application said.

**The 17-Year-Old Darienite's Account**

The 17-year-old also provided police an account that did not jibe with what other eyewitnesses described.

The teen said he sent the New Canaan juvenile a Snapchat message calling for a “face-to-face” with Minicus and that after arriving at the house, he “saw Minicus and [the juvenile] wrestling and throwing punches at each other.”

The teen “said the fight lasted about 15 seconds and ended with both Minicus and [the juvenile] agreeing not to badmouth each other anymore,” the applications said.

He added that “after the fight ended they [the Darien teens] were asked to leave” and “so they all shook hands and left.”

Police, in releasing information about the arrests last week, had identified the Darien teen as holding down the New Canaan juvenile while he got punched.

Contrary to other eyewitness statements, the teen claimed that “no one else jumped in on the fight between

Minicus and [the juvenile]” and that he himself “was nowhere near the two of them.”

That account made claims “that no one else had made and in fact were in stark contrast to multiple other witness statements,” according to police.

Yet the teen’s lawyer, [Stamford-based criminal defense attorney](#) Mark Sherman, “stated he trusted his client was being truthful.”

#### **Minicus Apologizes**

The day after the juvenile made police aware of the assault, Minicus began texting the victim to apologize “and then even went to their house,” according to police.

The juvenile victim provided police with screen shots of the texts Minicus had been sending, indicating that the Darien offender wanted to apologize.

“Minicus stated in the texts that he knew [the juvenile] was not going anywhere with this incident but wanted to apologize to his father so his father did not make an issue out of it,” the arrest warrant application said.

The officer “made contact with Minicus’s mother, Maureen,” who “stated that she had driven her son” to the New Canaan juvenile’s house to apologize for what had happened on Nov. 6, the applications said.

#### **Lawyer Nixes Police Questioning**

“I explained that I would like to speak with her son and she arranged to bring him in around 5:30 p.m,” the officer said in his sworn affidavit. “Maureen then contacted me around 5 p.m. and stated they had sought counsel and were advised not to give a statement.”

When the officer finally did make contact with Minicus’ attorney, he was told that the attorney “was currently out of the country and did not want his client giving a statement without counsel.”

The attorney “said he would let me know if he changed his mind when he came back from his trip,” the applications said.

Police never heard back from that attorney.

Minicus and Joyce each were released on \$500 bond and scheduled to appear Tuesday, Dec. 5 in state Superior Court in Norwalk. The 17-year-old’s case was referred to the Juvenile Matters Division of state Superior Court.

**EDITORIAL**

**Face some facts, Darien**

The alleged conduct here, if proven, is obviously part of a pattern of behavior over the course of years, involving different teenagers who have one thing in common: They're in the Darien High School football program.

The vast majority of football players in the program don't get in anywhere near this kind of trouble, and it's inevitable that some teens will get into trouble no matter what extracurricular activity they're involved with. This team, over the years has helped hundreds of students to grow in many ways (and its record of success on the field has, no doubt, helped motivate the players to be better disciplined, a key element in anyone's success).

But this latest fiasco, New Canaan police say, involved trash talk connected, at least in part, to Darien Blue Wave football. The alleged fight would have been with muscles enlarged in the Darien Blue Wave football program. That program needs to be enlarging something in the heads and hearts of its players or it is failing them. The reputation of the Darien Blue Wave football program and the reputation of the town itself got a black eye.

So the town, the Board of Education (which didn't mention this incident at all at Tuesday night's meeting), the school district administration, the high school administration, the DHS sports department and Head Coach Robert Trifone owe this community and the New Canaan community an explanation about what they're doing to keep this football rivalry from getting out of hand.

You see two pictures of young men who are largely, and apparently mostly, responsible for their own actions. (We expect that this won't prevent each of them from getting into colleges appropriate to their talents, which the football program has no doubt bolstered. There's no reason that this alleged detour from the straight and narrow should prevent them from future success.) But, if the allegations prove true, they wouldn't be shouldering the entire responsibility for this incident.

This football rivalry appears to have contributed to bad behavior, repeatedly, over years, since the two men pictured here were 10 years old. That's a pattern that no one should deny.

Pray that more serious harm doesn't result from this rivalry in the future, because if the adults responsible for boys in this program aren't doing enough to keep a rivalry in a boys' game in proper perspective, we'll have to rely on prayer alone.

God help the potential victims.