

Law Firm's Probe Finds No Proof of Bullying of Rutgers Football Players



William Maderer Photo courtesy of Saiber

A New Jersey law firm hired by Rutgers' University to probe bullying allegations in its football program has turned up no evidence of wrongdoing.

A report released Tuesday by Saiber in Florham Park found defensive coordinator Dave Cohen had a heated exchange with a player but didn't violate anti-bullying strictures, and he was dealt with swiftly by school officials.

The firm also found that the player, Jevon Tyree, didn't suffer retaliation in the form of decreased team participation, as he had claimed.

The incident, at a team study hall session in March, began as "friendly banter regarding a haircut and then escalated," according to the report, issued after Saiber partners William Maderer and DanaLynn Colao interviewed about three dozen people and obtained documents.

Tyree, a freshman cornerback, later claimed that Cohen got in his face, called him a "bitch" and a "pussy," and threatened to head-butt him. He also alleged that Cohen called him "a Division 3 player with a Division 1 scholarship."

Cohen acknowledged getting angry and calling Tyree a bitch but denied making the other remarks, getting in the student's face or threatening violence.

Other players present in the study hall described the incident as unremarkable and mostly corroborated Cohen, who "was generally described as a passionate person who genuinely loved his job and cared about the well-being of the players, both as athletes and as people," Maderer said.

Cohen, within hours, apologized to those present in the study hall, reported the incident to head football coach Kyle Flood and tried to reach Tyree that night to apologize but was successful.

Flood reprimanded Cohen the next day and addressed the incident during a staff meeting, though it would be months before Tyree complained of the incident.

Players and coaches “universally corroborated” that Tyree wasn’t held out of practice, games or team meetings, Maderer wrote. “The resounding message we repeatedly heard was that Jevon played sparingly because ‘the best players play.’”