



STEELE COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

ROBERT J. JARRETT
County Attorney

October 28, 2024

To: Blooming Prairie Police Department (BPPD)
Cc: City of Blooming Prairie City Attorney
Re: BPPD Case #24000110

The Steele County Attorney's Office (SCAO) reviewed BPPD case number 24000110 upon the request of the Blooming Prairie City Attorney.

On Saturday, October 5, 2024, around 10:30 AM, BPPD was dispatched to the high school football field for a report of a past-action assault. An investigation took place with the assistance of the Steele County Sheriff's Office. Cell phone videos of the incident were collected.

SCAO has reviewed the case file, statements of involved parties, and videos.

Under Minnesota law, whoever intentionally inflicts bodily harm upon another person is guilty of an assault. "Intentionally" means that the offender had a purpose to cause the result specified, or the act performed by the offender, if successful, would cause that result. Minn. Stat. § 609.224, subd. 1 (2); CRIMJIG 8.17.

Here, a youth tackle football game was being held on the high school field. A Blooming Prairie coach was standing on the sidelines. A play was ending, and two youths were coming at him at "full speed." One youth passed the coach, and the coach put his hand out and grabbed onto the second youth. When the coach grabbed onto the youth, who was on the opposing team, he held onto the youth's facemask. This action caused the youth to fall to the ground due to the momentum of the youth running and being abruptly stopped. The youth quickly sat up and went back into the field of play.

The involved youth player stated he was running full speed attempting to push a player out of bounds when the coach grabbed his facemask. The youth reported the coach stated, "no, you can't push him out of bounds." The youth reported he had neck pain, caused by the incident.

The involved coach stated he was standing in one place when he attempted to stop the second youth from going further out of bounds toward the track where the first youth was. The coach believed he grabbed the youth's shoulder pads to slow the youth down and he accidentally grabbed the helmet and facemask. The coach said he felt terrible but did not intend for anything malicious to happen. The coach understood why the youth's parents would be upset and apologized for the conduct.

The video clip of the incident is alarming; however, the totality of the incident must be reviewed. The coach did not confront, go towards, or otherwise further engage with the opposing team's youth in this incident beyond the grabbing of the mask from where he stood on the sideline. The coach stated he was attempting to stop the player from going further out of bounds and stop further action out of bounds. The State would be unable to refute this claim given the coach's actions before and after the grabbing. There is no evidence the coach's intentions were criminal in nature or he had any malicious intent.

A facemask is a foul in football, which occurs in many football games. The game of football acknowledges they are safety fouls; however, it is well understood that facemasks occur and are often accidental given the fast pace of play and quick reactions. This case is different as it was a coach face-masking a player, however, lends toward being a football-type act and not an act whose purpose is to cause harm to another.

Based on the above information, there is insufficient evidence that a reasonable jury would find proof beyond a reasonable doubt that an assault took place. Therefore, there will not be any criminal charges and the matter is closed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert J. Jarrett". The signature is stylized with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Robert J. Jarrett
Steele County Attorney