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Alleged theft of visiting football team's possessions under investigation

By Ania Keenan

Upon returning to the visitor's locker rooms by the stadium field after the first half of their varsity game against Miramonte on Sept. 5, Hayward's Stellar Preparatory High school senior and football captain Kiano Ropati said that phones, laptops and an iPad had been stolen from the team's bags as they played.

According to Miramonte assistant principal Nick Carpenter, this was not the only case of theft that took place that night. "There was a theft during the junior varsity football game in our boys' locker room, located by the pool," Carpenter said. Coach Desmond Gumbs from Stellar Preparatory confirmed that the locker room doors were locked when the team went up to play the first half.

"Miramonte security camera footage shows a white male in a hoodie leaving the locker room with a backpack shortly before halftime ended," Stellar Preparatory principal Bob Baty said.

According to a list compiled by Stellar Preparatory an estimated total of 13 phones, three sets of airpods and several gold chains were stolen. This is in addition to the estimated total of \$530 of cash taken from the team.

In total almost \$20,000 in electronics and cash were stolen from the team that night, according to the current crime report, which is still being processed by the Orinda Police Department.

Stellar Preparatory has a total student body of 33, with 27 of them playing on the football team.

Baty relayed his concern that this theft has affected a majority of his students. "Almost everyone on the team lost a valuable; one student's mother saved for three years to buy him a phone and it got stolen in one night," Baty said.

"Many of our students are disadvantaged financially," said Baty, "most of them don't have the money to buy new phones right away, some do, but for most it will take them a long time."

The Orinda Police Department is involved in an ongoing investigation surrounding this case. As both sides wait for a crime report to be processed with an official list of stolen items, the exact course of action remains open.

"There were parents doing the tickets outside the whole time, so there is no way they could have gotten in," Miramonte football coach Jack Shram said.

At Stellar Preparatory, team parent Robert Harval is spearheading efforts to make sure lost items get returned to players. "It was an unbelievable game, it's a shame that this theft marred what could have been a great relationship between our schools," Harval said, adding, "but as a host, Miramonte was incredible."

Miramonte administrators are involved in an ongoing investigation surrounding these events and could not comment.

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