

North Branford coach suspended after alcohol incident

Michael Gannon , Register Staff (11/05/2006)

NORTH BRANFORD — Two weeks after the high school football team's quarterback was arrested at a booze party, one of the team's volunteer coaches was nabbed Friday night under nearly identical circumstances.

The underage drinking controversy has so far been focused on Superintendent of Schools Robert Wolfe, who was blasted by Mothers Against Drunk Driving, local police and a state politician for overturning the quarterback's suspension from the team in time for the homecoming game.

Wolfe took a more hard line approach Saturday. He suspended the volunteer coach.

"Someone asked me if I'm disappointed," Wolfe said. "I'm outraged and I have already addressed the matter with the head coach regarding this volunteer's work with the team."

Friday's incident started with a tip to police about an underage drinking party at a local home following the football game between North Branford and Westbrook-Old Saybrook.

Police sources said officers responded to 75 W. Pond Drive at approximately 11 p.m. and noticed the lawn littered with empty beer cans as well as an empty 30-pack of light beer.

Police said the door was answered by a resident of the home, Richard Haggerty, 19, who officers said had an odor of alcohol on his breath.

Police said there was beer in plain sight near the door. Police said they also spotted John Falvey, 20, of 27 Williams St., who was issued an infraction for possession of alcohol by a minor.

Falvey told police that he is a coach with the high school football team. Wolfe said Saturday that Falvey is not a paid assistant coach, but does volunteer at practices two to three times per week.

Wolfe said Falvey is suspended from interaction with students pending the outcome of an ongoing investigation, and that he would be terminated if the allegations prove to be true.

Police said Haggerty also was charged with possession of marijuana, possession with intent to sell and possession of drug paraphernalia when officers found a glass pipe, a bong and three plastic bags containing suspected marijuana residue, two digital scales, \$660 in cash and a box containing suspected marijuana stems and seeds.

No North Branford players were cited Friday night and police did not know if any had attended the party.

Two weeks ago, six high school athletes were cited for possession of alcohol at a house party. They were suspended from all school activities up to and including the following week's homecoming game. Two of the football players, including starting quarterback Matt Rossi, had their suspensions overturned by Wolfe following an administrative investigation.

Police and some public officials have accused Wolfe of undercutting them, saying he did not ask officers involved to testify. Wolfe has said the police do not have their facts straight, and has alleged personal and political motivations on the part of some individuals.

The Oct. 21 incident also led to one of the first uses in Connecticut of a new state law that holds homeowners accountable for preventing underage drinking on their property. The law went into effect on Oct. 1.

The homeowner in the Oct. 21 incident was arrested and charged with failure to halt possession of alcohol by a minor. No homeowner was cited Friday night.

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