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SIX FORMER RIDLEY HOCKEY PLAYERS CHARGED WITH ASSAULT STEMMING FROM ATTACK DURING MARCH PLAYOFF GAME

NORRISTOWN (Nov. 28, 2017)—Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele and Hatfield Township Police Chief William J. Tierney announce assault charges against six former hockey players stemming from a coordinated on-ice assault that occurred during a playoff hockey game between Central Bucks West and Ridley. Charged are Ridley players: Brock Anderson, 18, of Morton, Pa.; Jake Cross, 19, of Secane, Pa.; Nathan Dunning, 19, of Morton, Pa.; Ryan Gricco, 18, of Swarthmore, Pa.; Thomas Plotts, 19, of Woodlyn, Pa.; and a player who was a juvenile at the time.

Cross, Dunning and Gricco are each charged with two counts of Simple Assault and Conspiracy to Commit Simple Assault, both misdemeanors of the second-degree, as well as harassment, a summary offense. Anderson and Plotts are charged with one count each of Simple Assault and Conspiracy to Commit Simple Assault as well as harassment.

A preliminary hearing before Magisterial District Judge Andrea Duffy was held today for Anderson, Cross, Gricco and Plotts. In holding all charges, Judge Duffy said the video showed a “coordinated attack.” Dunning waived his preliminary hearing.

The extensive investigation by the Hatfield Police began when a 911 call was placed at approximately 10:19 p.m. regarding a large fight at Hatfield Ice, 350 County Line Road in Hatfield Township. Detectives obtained video recordings of the Eastern Pennsylvania Interscholastic Hockey Association “Flyers Cup” Class 2A quarterfinal ice hockey game between CB West and Ridley. The videos along with numerous interviews revealed that the coordinated attack began late in the third period with Ridley losing 7-1 and facing elimination from the playoff tournament.

After a stoppage of play, Ridley player Cross skated onto the ice after consulting with his coach, Stephane Charbonneau, and said something to each of his teammates. At the drop of the puck, the Ridley players, all seniors, immediately and simultaneously attacked the CB West players, punching them in the head and face, even when CB West players were down on the ice. One Ridley player, Plotts, exited the penalty box to join in the assault, despite having additional time to serve on his penalty.

“This was a game that went from healthy competition to violence. The Central Bucks West hockey players got jumped, just as if they were in an alley somewhere,” said Steele. “It’s true that checking an opponent and hits are a part of hockey, but a coordinated and planned physical attack with a goal of injuring the other team’s players is not hockey; it’s assault. And that is why these six young men were charged.”

CB West players sustained injuries as a result of the Ridley players’ assault. One victim was transported to Abington Memorial Hospital, suffering from a broken orbital plate, broken nose, a concussion and facial lacerations that required stitches. Other CB West players suffered injuries. Due to the extent of the injuries caused by the assault by Ridley players, two CB West players could not play in the team’s next playoff game. CB West lost, and the team, which had been seeded No. 1, was eliminated from the championship tournament.

“This investigation took some time. It involved dozens of interviews, review of multiple videos of the assault and was very thorough. Through the investigation, we tried to assess whether any other adults had a role in the orchestrated assault by the players, and we have made the determination that the evidence we have does not rise to the level to support charges against anyone else at this time,” said Steele. “This video that was played at the preliminary hearing is disturbing to watch. Hockey is a sport of physical contact as are other sports like football or boxing. But there are rules of engagement and rules of sportsmanship. This behavior by frustrated seniors went well past typical hockey ‘fighting’—which is not even allowed at the high school level—and into the realm of criminal behavior.”

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney John Gradel.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele

CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.