

Pittsford soccer players, fans accused of racist slurs against opponents

Allegations are latest in series of racial incidents involving district schools

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Pittsford Mendon High School students and fans are accused of using racist slurs against Black opponents during boys and girls soccer games against Greece Arcadia earlier this week, the latest embarrassing episode for Pittsford.

The incidents are said to have happened Tuesday during the boys soccer game and on Wednesday during the girls soccer game, just as other Pittsford students were organizing an antiracism protest. Both games took place at Pittsford Mendon.

On Tuesday, fans at the boys soccer game are said to have made monkey sounds toward Black Greece Arcadia players.

In an email Friday evening, the Greece Arcadia boys soccer coach, Matt Vergamini, stressed that the Pittsford Mendon players were not the ones at fault.

'I and my players want to make sure that their team is not included in the actions that took place off the field,' he wrote.

Then on Wednesday, Rumella Cameron, the mother of a Greece Arcadia soccer player, said her daughter texted her after the girls game to tell her that a Pittsford Mendon player had called one of her teammates a n-----, and that other players and people in the stands had used slurs as well.

'She's been playing since fourth grade and this is the first time this has ever happened,' Cameron said. 'She was very upset.'

Her daughter did not attend practice Thursday and was unsure about whether she would play in her next game on Friday, she said.

Greece spokeswoman Laurel Heiden confirmed the nature of the allegations and said the two districts are working together to investigate them and 'determine the appropriate next steps.'

Pittsford spokeswoman Nancy Wayman also said there is a joint investigation. 'As with any allegation of this nature, the school district takes it very seriously, and is conducting a thorough investigation,' she wrote in an email.

If true, the soccer game allegations would be the latest in a series of acts of racism by Pittsford students.

The east-side district was already in turmoil this week over a video that shows a white student holding a realistic-looking airsoft gun and threatening to kill Black people, using a slur to describe them.

In another recent case, middle school students exchanged text messages using the same racial slur and saying that Black people should be enslaved.

Rumella Cameron said she is eager to hear more about the outcome of the investigation and what consequences, if any, the Pittsford students will receive.

At the same time, she said she was impressed to see a large group of Pittsford Mendon and Sutherland students walk out of class Wednesday to protest their classmates' racist acts and the district's tepid response.

'I thought that was amazing to see them have the courage to stand up for what's right,' she said. 'They're the ones who are there, so if they feel it's being swept under the rug, it's good they're doing something about it.'

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