

## Pittsford, Greece disagree on racial slurs at soccer games

### Justin Murphy

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK

The Pittsford and Greece central school districts came to different conclusions about whether Pittsford soccer players or fans used racial slurs at games last month.

According to Greece: “Our investigation supports the claims made. We believe our students and will stand by them and their families.”

According to Pittsford: “The findings clearly indicate that the students’ behavior – while disruptive – was not racial in nature or racially motivated. ... Evidence from our investigation does not support the serious allegation that one of our players used a racial slur.”

The allegations referred to two soccer games between Pittsford Mendon and Greece Arcadia, a boys contest on Sept. 28 and a girls contest on Sept. 29.

At the boys game, it was alleged that Mendon fans made monkey sounds toward a Black Arcadia player. At the girls game, Greece players alleged that at least one Mendon player used a racial slur.

Both districts said they interviewed numerous direct witnesses and reviewed game video and audio.

The accusations came on the heels of two other racist incidents in Pittsford: a video where a student brandished an air-soft gun and said he had it “to kill (racial epithet)” and a group text message where middle school students joked about re-enslaving Black people.

Hundreds of Pittsford high school students walked out of school the following week to protest what they called an inadequate administration response to racist incidents in the district.

In a statement, Superintendent Michael Pero said the district is “focusing on moving forward and being better.”

Regarding the boys soccer game, Pero said that the Mendon fans’ “disruptive” behavior came “in response to taunting by the Greece Arcadia players toward them at multiple times throughout the event.”

Greece, meanwhile, added in a brief statement: “No matter the district, school campuses should be spaces where all people are treated with respect and dignity. We will continue to work collaboratively with districts across Monroe County to improve how we handle and respond to difficult situations.”

This is not the first time a Pittsford investigation has failed to validate claims made by another school’s students. A similar case occurred in 2017, when a Corning- Painted Post lacrosse player said a Pittsford player used a racial slur against him on the field.

Corning-Painted Post collected signed statements from several of its players who reported hearing the slur as well as the head coach. Pittsford said its own investigation proved there had been no racial slur.

In a different incident, in 2014, Pittsford students chanted “We want Slurpees” at a Brighton basketball player of Indian heritage. After footage was posted on YouTube, Pero made a statement together with the Brighton superintendent condemning the behavior.

“We have been working with our colleagues in both districts throughout the weekend to address intolerant and unacceptable fan behavior,” the statement read. “That work continues today.”

Contact staff writer Justin Murphy at [jmurphy7@gannett.com](mailto:jmurphy7@gannett.com).



**A group of students were part of a walkout at Sutherland High School in protest of recent racial issues.**

JAMIE GERMANO/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

Pero said social media served to “add layers of complexity, introduce misinformation and rumors, and exacerbate an already tense environment,” and congratulated the girl soccer players “for their patience and fortitude during this personally challenging period.”

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