

## Few witnesses emerge after hockey assault

### Team parent reports no sign of adult, 10-year-old clashing

By Megan Woolhouse, Globe Staff | April 1, 2007

The charges against a Hopedale hockey dad accused of kicking and punching a 10-year-old boy after a game last month drew widespread attention. But how many people actually witnessed the alleged attack, just off the ice?

"I don't know how many people were there," Westborough Police Chief Alan R. Gordon said last week. "It happened away from where all the fans would have been."

The game took place March 3 in Rink B of the North Star Youth Forum in Westborough. The initial police investigator's report stated that the alleged attack took place at a night game; it actually took place after a 6 a.m. game, according to Gordon.

Police have charged Richard Rosenberger of Hopedale with two counts of assault on a child, saying he punched and kicked a 10-year-old boy near a rink exit.

Rosenberger was released on \$5,000 bail after being held at the Worcester County House of Correction.

Rosenberger's son plays for a Tri-Valley Indians team, which defeated a Franklin Flyers team, 4-0, in the March 3 game. The alleged victim played for the Flyers.

Tri-Valley parent Sharon Constantin of Canton said she was at the early-morning game and saw and heard nothing out of the ordinary. She said she was mystified by the charges against Rosenberger and wondered why she was never contacted by police.

"There had to have been 30 parents standing at the exit," she said in a phone interview. "Nothing happened."

Westborough police said the parents of the 10-year-old boy initially asked team officials to investigate the incident, then reported it to police two weeks later. Gordon said team officials investigated, but their findings were "inconclusive."

The boy told a police investigator that as he was leaving the ice, his glove got caught on the rink door. He jerked it free and struck one of the Tri-Valley players. The boy said he apologized, but the other player shoved him.

"While having words with this player, an unidentified man charged and began striking him in the abdominal area and also kicked him in the leg," Officer Jeffrey Keaveney wrote in the police report. The man also used expletives in the attack, Gordon said.

With the help of Tri-Valley head coach Mark Reynolds, police identified Richard Rosenberger as the parent. An investigator showed Rosenberger's driver's license photo to the boy, who identified him as the man who assaulted him. The boy's parents also gave police photographs of their son's bruised body, according to police.

Police called Rosenberger, who they said denied the attack and declined to go to the police station to file a statement. Officers went to his house and arrested him on March 22. The next day he was charged in Westborough District Court with assault and battery of a child and assault and battery of a child with a dangerous weapon (his shod foot).

Rosenberger's attorney, Edmund Myers, also denied that his client assaulted the boy, saying at his arraignment that he "had no memory of the incident at all."

Myers did not return a phone call requesting a comment at midweek.

Officials for both teams also did not return phone calls.

Constantin said emotions ran high the morning of the game. Many of the 9- and 10-year-old Franklin players left the ice in tears after the loss, she said.

Constantin said she has sat near Rosenberger, a father of three, at games all season and never saw him get angry.

"I'm always yelling for my son to hustle. He always turns around and giggles at me. He's always subdued," she said of Rosenberger. "And he never missed a game until this whole incident."

The teams belong to the Massachusetts Hockey Association. Its president, Dan Esdale, said the group would likely wait to see what happens in court before deciding what action to take.

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