



Joseph Curtis
Superintendent

Pittsfield Public Schools

Administration Center
269 First Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
www.pittsfield.net

jcurtis@pittsfield.net
Tel. 413-499-9512

March 13, 2024

Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association Inc.
33 Forge Parkway
Franklin, MA 02038
Delivered via email to miaa@miaa.net

To the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association:

This letter is being sent in conjunction with Principal Maggie Harrington-Esko, who is offering an accounting of the events that unfolded during the Final Four Game at Worcester State University between Pittsfield High School and Old Rochester Regional School District on March 11, 2024.

From Principal Maggie Harrington-Esko:

The following has been composed on behalf of the Pittsfield High School Boys Basketball Program, along with the families and the student body who showed their support for the team during their Final Four game on the evening of March 11, 2024, at Worcester State University. Throughout this event, two assaults occurred, one on the court and another outside the premises. Regrettably, neither of these incidents were addressed by the officials, MIAA Representatives, or the police officers present at the scene. Despite requests for MIAA and police assistance made by two Pittsfield High Administrators for their team and supporters, these pleas were disregarded and left unattended. As a community, we strongly felt that our safety was compromised, and we earnestly request that the MIAA thoroughly review and acknowledge the occurrences of that evening.

During the third quarter of the Pittsfield High vs Old Rochester Regional State basketball game, one of our players, Malachi Perry, was under the basket and went up for a layup, knocking down ORR number 15. Perry turned as number 15 was getting up; both players made eye contact, and number 15 on ORR blatantly spit in Perry's face. Perry shoved him away and was given a technical foul. Perry was taken out of the game, took a seat on the bench with spit on his face, and was visibly upset. Perry said to Coach, "Coach, he spit on me" over and over.

Coach Edgerton approached the referees, asking for number 15 to be removed from the game. The referee's response to Coach Edgerton was that the other referee did not see the spit but just that they saw the shove. They finally said, "If number 15 does one more thing, he will be removed". Coach Edgerton once again reiterated to the referee that number 15 needed to be out of the game, but number 15 remained in the game. When Perry returned to the game, he experienced students from the ORR team bench pulling on his jersey when he was on the court, and he and his teammates being called the "N" word by students in the fan section.

Following the assault, the game transitioned from a high-energy athletic event to a tense and unstable environment, affecting not just our players and coaches but also our families, student supporters, and community members. This incident prompted a response from PHS staff and students. Two PHS staff members, both men of color, were swiftly surrounded by police officers. Throughout the remainder of the evening, law enforcement remained stationed around these two staff members and the PHS fan section. Coaches, players, and fans reported that they experienced comments including but not limited to “Go back where you come from,” “He’s a f----- ghetto punk,” “You guys f----- suck,” and “You’re a b-----” both during and after the game from ORR students, fans and parents.

Given the tense atmosphere in the gym, both Principal Esko and Vice Principal Shepard sought assistance from both the MIAA Representatives and the numerous Police Officers present. However, none of their requests for aid were fulfilled. As a result, when our team and supporters were escorted out of the gym without assistance, they were left vulnerable to further harassment and a subsequent assault, which occurred outside the building by a spectator. Meanwhile, Coach Edgerton kept his team in the gym as long as possible, awaiting a police escort. Eventually, MIAA representative Steve Dubzinski escorted the coach and team to the locker room. During this passage, our team had to traverse through the ORR parent section, where adults from their team directed derogatory comments towards the coaches and players.

Pittsfield High School athletes are expressing that moving forward, they are afraid of what it means for a black athlete to compete in the state of Massachusetts. As stated on their website, the MIAA has made a commitment to “No Place for Hate” within Massachusetts High School Sports. We agree and ask that you uphold this and use the MIAA investigatory processes to look into the incidents outlined above.

This opportunity empowers you to take action and enact tangible improvements for both the students and the communities you serve.

Respectfully,

Joseph Curtis

Superintendent
Pittsfield Public Schools
jcurtis@pittsfield.net
413.499.9512

Maggie Harrington-Esko

Principal
Pittsfield High School
mesko@pittsfield.net
413.499.9535