

Teen not barred from school for locker room horseplay video

Written by bill Schanen IV
Thursday, 09 February 2017 00:37

Prosecutor seeks restrictions but judge doesn't ban contact with Port High, schoolmate

The question in an Ozaukee County courtroom Tuesday wasn't what amount of bail to set for Tanner R. Meinel but the conditions the 17-year-old Port Washington High School student charged with a felony for making a video of locker room shenanigans and posting it on Snapchat will have to live by while his case is pending.

Assistant District Attorney Jeffrey Sisley, who said he didn't know if Meinel was in school, recommended he be prohibited from having contact with Port High and the 16-year-old he recorded on the video.

That, Meinel's attorney Matt Last said, would be a problem. Meinel, who after the Nov. 10 locker room incident was described by Thad Gabrielse, Port High's dean of students and athletic director, as a "very good kid" who was "fooling around and didn't think," is finishing his senior year at the school.

At the very least, Sisley said, Meinel should be prohibited from having contact with the 16-year-old in the video.

Last, however, said that both teenagers are members of the Port High wrestling team, and the no-contact order proposed by Sisley would mean Meinel would have to quit the team.

Both teenagers have described each other as friends in police reports and comments made to Ozaukee Press.

Sisley relented after reading a report that indicated the 16-year-old did not want a court order prohibiting Meinel from having contact with him.

Ozaukee County Circuit Judge Joseph Voiland said he saw no need for such an order.

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“I’m not going to interfere with the authority of the principal and the coach at the school,” he said.

The only condition set by Voiland is that Meinel not have a cell phone with a camera.

Last said, “Mr. Meinel no longer has a cell phone.”

Instead of a cash bond, Voiland set Meinel’s bail at a \$2,500 signature bond. By signing a signature bond, a defendant does not have to post cash but promises to pay the amount of the bond if he violates the conditions of his bail.

On Dec. 29, Meinel was charged with capturing an image of nudity in a locker room under a statute referred to as Wisconsin’s revenge porn law, inspired by jilted lovers who post nude photos of their exes online to exact revenge. The felony Meinel faces is punishable by a maximum 1-1/2 years in prison and two years of extended supervision.

Meinel is accused of recording a cell phone video that shows the naked backside of the 16-year-old as he was retrieving his underwear in a school locker room after phy-ed class, then posting it to Snapchat, the popular mobile app that typically self-deletes images and videos 10 seconds after they’re opened.

According to a Port Washington Police Department report, a student who received the Snapchat video reported it to Gabrielse. School officials then notified police of the incident, which occurred around 10:20 a.m. on Nov. 10.

Administrators said they were obligated to report the incident to police because the video was posted on the Internet, but added that they didn’t think doing so would result in one of their students being charged with a felony.

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“It was definitely a surprise to us,” Supt. Michael Weber said last month. “We thought if anything he might face a misdemeanor or just receive a warning.

“Sometimes people get caught up in the law, and it’s not fair and it’s not right.”

Among the students interviewed by officer Eric Leet after the incident was the 16-year-old, who said he was showering when two other students started joking around by pretending they were going to throw his underwear in the shower.

A short time later, the 16-year-old said, he exited the shower and found his underwear hanging from a speaker box. He retrieved his underwear, then noticed Meinel making a video of him with his cell phone. He said he did not agree to be recorded on video or to have the video distributed and was embarrassed by the incident, according to the police report.

“He indicated that although he didn’t want to get anyone in trouble over the matter ... he was disturbed by the video and its distribution,” Leet wrote in the report.

Meinel admitted taking the video and posting it on Snapchat after happening upon the scene, but said he meant no harm to the teenager shown in the video, whom he considered a friend.

“He (Meinel) indicated that he wasn’t trying to embarrass (the 16-year-old) and that he believed they were actually friends,” Leet wrote in his report. “He stated that it was just kind of a funny scene and he sent it out as more of a joke.”

Leet spoke with other students who confirmed that the “horseplay” with the underwear was not done to stage the video taken by Meinel. The officer then told administrators that he considered the creation of the video and its distribution “very serious,” adding that he would be “looking at and considering a request for criminal charges,” according to the report.

Ultimately, Leet asked the district attorney to charge Meinel with the felony he now faces.

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