

Coach cleared of all charges

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PALISADES PARK — A borough high school football coach whose career was abruptly halted when he was accused of a locker-room attack on a student has been cleared of all charges.

Tom Paglione lost his coaching job at the high school after the assault and child abuse charges in September 2007, but said he doesn't harbor any grudges against the player or the school district.

"I don't care how long it took, I'm just happy that my name was cleared," said Paglione, of Fairview, who coached at the school for 13 years.

According to accounts at the time, Paglione and the player exchanged heated words before a weekday practice, the coach grabbed the player and they ended up on the locker-room floor.

His attorney, Tim Smith, said on Tuesday that Paglione was, in fact, the victim of a "vicious assault" by the player.

Paglione declined to discuss the incident but said that he had to get shoulder and knee surgery and take unpaid leave from his Union City teaching post because of injuries he sustained in the tussle.

He said he also lost track coaching jobs at The Dwight-Englewood School after the incident. He retained his job teaching math and science in Union City.

"I coached for many years and I didn't even have a penalty [flag] thrown at me," Paglione said. "For this to happen was devastating."

Palisades Park Superintendent Mark Hayes declined comment.

A Bergen County grand jury declined to indict him on a charge of cruelty and neglect of children, according to Smith.

The assault charge was transferred to several different municipal courts before a New Milford Court judge dismissed the charge in February, according to court records.

Smith said the player was tried as a juvenile for charges related to the incident and acquitted. The player was never named because of his age.

Paglione has filed a claim with the district for payment of legal fees. He said he didn't pursue head coaching jobs while the charges were still pending because he didn't want his legal travails to create image problems for other programs.

"Now," he said. "I want to get back to coaching."

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