

Referees support one of their own at accused attacker's court appearance

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MCCRACKEN COUNTY, KY– Local referees showed up to support one of their own Tuesday after police say he was attacked at a game.



A police report says Keyon Menifield, of Michigan, sucker punched referee Kenny Culp during a youth basketball game this month.

The incident happened during a travel ball tournament at the Paducah Regional Sports Plex. Culp had to be taken to Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville. He came home from the hospital Monday, but he's still recovering from a brain injury that doctors say could have lasting effects.

At the time, Menifield was [arrested and charged with assault of a sports official](#).

Chuck Medley has known Culp for 19 years. "Why would someone do that to him? Because I've known him so much, and he's one of those

he'll go along and he just wants to help," Medley said.

Some referees said it could have been them.

Bob Renn is going on 35 years as a referee. He said he won't officiate any travel ballgames.



"Coaches are taught to respect the officials, kids are taught to to respect the officials, and a local high school sporting event seems to go a whole lot better," Renn said.

Renn said working under the Kentucky High School Athletic Association, he has lawyers and the support of the [National Federation of State High School Associations](#).

"Our officiating numbers-wise are falling through the roof," Renn said. "We don't have enough officials to go around right now, and that's sadly because of instances like this one."

The charge for assault of a sports official in Kentucky is a class A misdemeanor on the first offense, unless the individual gathered five or more people to assault the official — in which case it would be a class D felony. The charge also becomes a class D felony if it's the second time or more that the person has been convicted of the crime.

But, because of the severity of Culp's injuries, Menifield was later charged with second degree assault, which is a class C felony. [He was arrested on that charge during his court appearance Tuesday.](#)

The new arrest warrant says doctors reported that Culp suffered a broken collar bone, fractured sinus cavity and brain trauma. His bond was set at \$15,000.

[Other states have laws](#) that vary on assault of a sports official, and penalties can include banning the person accused of assault from an activity for a year and charging fines up to \$5,000.

Medley said at the end of the day, no matter the ref's call, physical violence is not OK.

"It was just a kid's game. Nobody was really benefiting anything from it. Nobody is a professional, so why did he do it?" Medley said.

Menifield's next court appearance is set for Thursday, April 18. His court date for the misdemeanor assault charge is set for April 23.

Local 6 received a statement from Culp's attorney. In part, it reads: "I want to express my appreciation to family, friends, fellow sports officials, and the community for prayers and words of encouragement over the last couple of weeks."

You can read the full statement in the document below this story.