



Search [input field] WEB SEARCH



Fri Dec 09 02:19pm EST

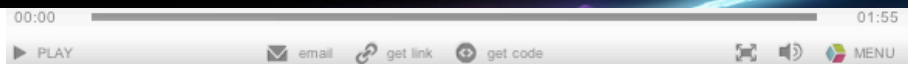
Offensive racist chant leads to suspension of entire hoops team

By Cameron Smith

An entire varsity girls basketball team in the Buffalo area has been suspended after its use of a racial slur as part of a pregame chant led to an in-school fight involving the team's only African-American member.



Get the new world champion of magazine apps. Get iPad App



As reported by the Buffalo News and NBC affiliate WGRZ, among other sources, at least 12 members of the Kenmore (N.Y.) East High girls basketball team were suspended for their use of a pregame chant in the locker room that included the most offensive racial epithet associated with African-Americans. According to the News, the team would chant "One, two, three [N-word]" just before leaving the locker room.

When the team's only African-American member, Tyra Batts, voiced her concern about the chant, teammates told her that the use of the slur was a team tradition, and that they were not willing to stop using it. For the record, Batts said the team's coach, Kristy Bondgren, had heard comments in practice referring to her race but that Bondgren was unaware about the team's pregame chant.

"I said, 'You're not allowed to say that word because I don't like that word,'" Batts told the News in a home video she submitted to the newspaper. "They said, 'You know we're not racist, Tyra. It's just a word, not a label.' I was outnumbered."

Yet, as long as the chant continued, so did Batts' frustration and anger. Eventually, following weeks of other racially inappropriate references -- [teammates allegedly made jokes referencing slavery, shackles and picking cotton](#) -- [a teammate used another disgusting racially insensitive insult](#), calling Batts a "black piece of [expletive]." That's when Batts could take it no longer and [was involved in a fight on school grounds](#) with the teammate who hurled the insult.

"It was a buildup of anger and frustration at being singled out of the whole team," Batts told the News.

Because of school rules, Batts had to be suspended for her involvement in the fight, as was the other girl involved in the fight. She was banned for five days, though she could have been suspended for longer for her role in the altercation. That changed because [she told administrators of the reasons for her frustration](#), and her suspension was immediately shortened while Kenmore officials investigated the claims of racism.

When they discovered that the chant had indeed been used, the school swiftly suspended at least 12 members of the team for two days a piece on the grounds that the chant was a violation of the school's code of conduct. The school board also canceled all team practices for a week, canceled a scheduled team bonding trip and scheduled a mandatory cultural sensitivity training session for the entire team. The superintendent of the Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda School District also [unilaterally rescinded a league-wide sportsmanship award](#) which had been awarded to the school in 2010.

"The insensitive chant is absolutely unacceptable, insensitive and not representative of the diverse student body within the ... school district," Mark Mondanaro, the Kenmore superintendent, told the News. "[The pregame chant was] wrong, unacceptable, unfortunate and will never, ever be tolerated."

There's little question that officials reacted swiftly when they became aware that the racist chant was being used, but that hardly mitigates the fact that it was used in the first place, and that it appears to have been for some time. Add to that the fact that only two of Batts' teammates have apologized for their use of the slur, and the teenager's father was left to openly wonder whether the program -- which is situated in [a town whose population is 97 percent white](#) -- has quietly been fostering a culture of racism for longer than anyone realized.

"This wasn't something that just developed this year," said Raymond Batts Jr., Tyra's father. "This is something that's been ongoing for quite some time."

Want more on the best stories in high school sports? Visit [RivalsHigh](#) or connect with Prep Rally on [Facebook](#) and follow us [on Twitter](#).

Other popular stories on Yahoo! Sports:

- [Video: NFL: Giants, Cowboys look to avoid collapses](#)
- [Hornets, Lakers, Rockets resume Chris Paul talks](#)
- [Fantasy Football video: Biggest busts of 2011](#)

