Unidentified University of Idaho football players caught stealing at bookstore

Josh Babcock/Moscow-Pullman Daily News

MOSCOW, Idaho – Multiple University of Idaho football players took nearly $400 worth of clothing from the UI VandalStore on Aug. 16, but bookstore officials declined to press charges after UI football coach Paul Petrino returned the items the same day, according to a report from the Moscow Police Department.

According to the report, received through a Daily News public records request, VandalStore manager Scott McDonald contacted police following the incident, which took place when the bookstore was closed to the public and open only to the football team. McDonald told police "he noticed several clothes hangers empty" and "watched video of the area of where the hangers were located and saw approximately three males stealing clothing."

"The video clearly showed some items being stolen and placed primarily in a red backpack, and it appeared as if other items may have been stolen and concealed in one suspect's pants," the report said.

According to the report, after police watched the video, two UI football graduate assistants at the store were asked to contact their superiors to determine who would be responsible for identifying the alleged suspects. A short time later two Vandals coaches, offensive coordinator Kris Cinkovich and Bobby Daly, director of football operations, arrived and watched the video. Shortly after, the report said, Petrino arrived and spoke to McDonald in McDonald's office. Following the conversation, Petrino left the store and an officer entered the office, where McDonald made the officer aware of a pile of clothing he said Petrino had brought back to the store.

According to the report, police asked McDonald who the coaches had identified in the video, but McDonald told the investigators he "didn't write it down and did not recall."

The report states McDonald said video would be provided to the MPD the following day, but VandalStore director John Bales told police on Aug. 17 he was going to keep the video and "the incident was going to be handled internally."

In an after-practice interview Tuesday, Petrino told the Daily News, "The situation has been handled and they're being internally disciplined."

Petrino declined to name the players involved or specify how many players were involved in the alleged theft. He also declined to give detail on the severity of the discipline.

When asked if the football players were given special treatment, Petrino said, "I don't think there is any special treatment at all."

He said the incident had been reported to the president.

The UI Dean of Students Office declined to comment on the incident Wednesday morning.

According to a statement released by the UI following questions to Petrino, "the athletes involved have been disciplined by the coaches and their behavior will be investigated through the Student Code of Conduct process."

The Student Code of Conduct says, "Any student found to have committed or to have attempted to commit the following misconduct is subject to the disciplinary process" including "Attempted or actual theft of or damage to property of the University or of another person."

The disciplinary process involves a report to the dean of students office, which investigates to see if the allegation is credible. If it is, the office sets a meeting with the student involved to hear his or her side, investigates further if necessary and issues a finding and disciplinary actions.

The UI said in its statement that had "the merchandise not been returned immediately the VandalStore would have filed charges as it has done in the past, consistent with store practice, but in this case, the merchandise was recovered immediately and the students involved were disciplined."

"Under the same circumstances, the university would have taken the same action with any other student(s)," the UI statement said.

According to the police report $369.99 worth of merchandise was taken and returned, including four T-shirts, a jacket and pair of shorts. The statement released by UI values the merchandise at $285.