

Hints of something hidden by UI football

Devin Rokyta/Moscow-Pullman Daily News Editorial Board

A group of University of Idaho football players took several hundred dollars worth of clothing, without paying, from the UI VandalStore on Aug. 16.

That we know.

It also seems undebatable that:

- The store was closed to the public and open only to the football team when the clothing went missing, causing the store manager to call the police.
- A police report indicates \$369.99 worth of merchandise was taken - although a statement from the UI says the value of the merchandise was only \$285.
- The entire incident was captured on surveillance video.
- Two UI football graduate assistants at the store were asked who would be responsible for identifying the alleged suspects. A coach and team official were called and came to view the video.
- A short time later UI football coach Paul Petrino showed up with the stolen merchandise in hand and had a conversation with a bookstore official in an office. Following that conversation the bookstore reversed course, stopped cooperating with the police and decided not to pursue charges against the players.

After that, thanks to ongoing efforts by the university and the athletic department, things become murky.

Petrino said last week the situation was handled internally, but he declined to elaborate on the identities of the players or the severity of the punishment. He also said he didn't believe his players were given special treatment. The university issued a similar statement, saying, "Under the same circumstances, the university would have taken the same action with any other student(s)."

Obviously, relatively few students have coaches who can be called on to return their stolen goods. To say otherwise is laughable, and the university and its officials should be ashamed for suggesting such.

Meanwhile, the Daily News has been encouraged by more than one source to pursue the story.

And we are.

We don't know what we will find. Maybe it is nothing more than a few immature freshman swiping some clothes. Maybe it's more than that.

Maybe the story will at least temporarily distract fans and alumni from the sad state of the football program, which has seen only two wins in two seasons under Petrino and only one winning season in 11 years under UI Athletic Director Rob Spear.