

# the NEW TRIER NEWS



Harris

## Homecoming game back on after Niles North team cleared of allegations of hazing

Skokie Police found no criminal activity by players

by Eleanor Kaplan and May Paddor

The fate of the homecoming game on Friday, Oct. 6 was unclear after seniors on the Niles North football team were accused of hazing underclassmen.

Niles North Principal James Edwards took the team off suspension on Monday Oct. 2 after the Skokie Police Department and school officials finished their investigation.

"It was determined no criminal conduct took place," according to a statement released by Niles North school officials

Niles North will play against New Trier in their first game back.

However, suspensions of individual players may still occur, according to the letter.

Although no criminal conduct took place, the school district will take "appropriate action to address the conduct determined to have taken place."

The conduct that took place has not been discussed in detail. Niles North Varsity Football Coach Mike Garoppolo did not return a request for comment.

In its statement Niles North said, "This last week has been a difficult one for our school community, but I am proud of the way we have come together. We were determined to act in the most proactive and thorough manner possible."

During their week-long suspension, Niles North had to forfeit their game against Maine South on Sep. 28. The team currently has a record of 2-3.

Despite the uncertainty of the homecoming game, the New Trier varsity football team remained positive. "We are all in great spirits and excited to represent New Trier for the rest of this year," said captain Max Kaufman and senior Wilson MacRitchie in a collaborative response.

Spirit Week has continued as usual, according to Pep Club sponsor Bridget Butterly. The only change to the homecoming agenda this year is that the Pep Club festival that used to take place on the front lawn will now be in the gyms.

"We will have an inflatable obstacle course, photo booth, Dip 'N Dots, neon lounge furniture, and alternative options for students going to the dance," said Butterly.

While the police investigation was ongoing, several alternative plans for the game arose. These included a possible field hockey game against North Shore Country Day School or a boys soccer game against Stevenson



After forfeiting their game against Maine South, Niles North is scheduled to play New Trier this Friday. | The Cube

High School.

Most schools have an athletic code or protocol when it comes to bullying or hazing incidents, said varsity head coach Brian Doll. The Niles Township Extracurricular Code of Conduct states, "Hazing and bullying activities are strictly prohibited; failure to abide by it [The Code of Conduct] could result in removal from the activity."

Possible disciplinary measures can range from a call to the parents to expulsion and arrest, depending on the severity of the offense.

New Trier captains emphasized that hazing would not happen on their team. "We all have respect for each other as teammates and the thought of these types of actions occurring

on our team is non-existent," said Kaufman and MacRitchie.

Hazing is not uncommon in high schools nationwide and certainly not in Illinois. According to the Chicago Tribune, hazing was a regular occurrence for the football players of Lake Zurich High School for the last twenty years.

Allegations of "sexual assault and acts of degradation" at Lake Zurich were ignored by the coach and administration until two alleged victims filed a federal lawsuit against the district due to an event that took place in Oct. 2016.

Hazing has also happened on local college teams. Five football players were arrested on Sep. 17 at Wheaton College for a hazing

incident that occurred in March 2016.

In response to the allegations at Niles North, Doll addressed his team about hazing. "It's important to educate our players on all the important things that are happening and make sure they feel safe at all times. It's important to have a program that's doing things the right way," said Doll.

These conversations are not taken lightly. "Doll reiterated a message that hazing or any other type of harassment with anybody on the team was unacceptable and not what New Trier football stood for," said Kaufman and MacRitchie. "We have been working hard this year to build positive team chemistry and it's something we are very proud of."

## Imber becomes first openly gay student body president

Imber seeks to create stronger connection between students and administration

by Rebecca Lee

The 2017-18 school year has already made history with the election of New Trier's first ever openly gay student body president, Jacob Imber.

In spring of the 2016-17 school year, 70 percent of last year's sophomores and juniors turned out to vote for Student Alliance officers. In addition to Imber's election, junior Bill Yen was elected vice president, senior Sofia Mena was elected secretary, and senior Elena Cata was elected treasurer.

The newly elected officers worked over the summer planning events and preparing for the school year. "We have created a strong, comfortable, cohesive group with an enthusiastic and packed agenda," said David Noskin and Stacy Kolack, the faculty sponsors of Student Alliance.

Imber's presidency is not only a personal victory, but also a milestone for New Trier.

"It makes me proud to know that New Trier is a place where being gay



Imber plans for an upcoming event with other SA members. | McCauley

wouldn't impede upon someone's ability to serve in a leadership role. It also makes me hopeful for outside of New Trier, where people can see you for what you accomplish and what you do as a leader instead of for your sexuality or your religion or your gender," said Imber.

Senior Ilana Nazari, who worked with Imber for three years and served as secretary of Student Alliance last year, agreed.

"We're lucky to live somewhere

and to go to school somewhere where Jacob can be openly gay and he can be the president and nobody is making a fuss about it. It's a step in the right direction, and I think it shows that New Trier is even more progressive than some of us may realize."

Although this is a notable moment for New Trier, many of Imber's peers point out that he has distinguished himself based on his merit above all else.

"I don't think that being openly

gay defines Jacob's personality or his role in our student government. I see Jacob for all of his other amazing qualities first and then I acknowledge and respect the bravery he exhibits by being openly gay and representing our high school of 4,000 kids," said senior Elena Cata, who is this year's treasurer of Student Alliance.

Stephen Hajjar, a senior who is not a part of Student Alliance, agreed.

"I don't think much about him being the first openly gay student to become president. I respect him the same way I would respect any student body president, and it is a good thing that he can just be a student body president."

When he was campaigning, Imber avoided using his sexuality as a platform. "I am careful to not create a student government that revolves around the fact that the president is gay. I think that's counter-productive to what Student Alliance does. I only give it so much thought before moving on to the logistical parts of my job, like what I want to do, how I'll make that happen, and how I can make Student Alliance productive," explained Imber.

Nazari attested to Imber's ability as president. "I couldn't think of anybody better suited for this job, especially because of how well he connects with people. He talks to the staff, and he's well-connected within

the student body. He's very well-rounded," said Nazari.

In addition to his roles in Student Alliance, Imber has continually participated in school theater productions. He co-directed this year's Lagniappe-Potpourri alongside seniors Elena Cata and Teddy Fischer.

As a freshman, Imber served as president of Student Senate, the student government at the Northfield campus. As a sophomore and junior, he was the chair of the PR committee of Student Alliance.

"Students need a say in their own education, and student government is the most efficient way to do that. You can't just hope for change. You have to get involved in an administrative way that makes that change possible," said Imber.

Beyond the specific tasks that Student Alliance will take on this year, Imber and other members have expressed their commitment to advocating for students.

"I remind myself that not everyone at New Trier who is gay has the same positive experience that I did. So even though I have this position and I am gay, that doesn't mean that gay rights is a non-issue at New Trier," said Imber.

"As president, I want to make New Trier an accepting and open environment for everyone."