

Roxanne Maher

From: Scott Johnson
Sent: Wednesday, October 11, 2023 12:11 PM
To: Roxanne Maher
Subject: FW: Responding to Concerns Regarding LYL Football Micros

Scott Johnson Jr, CPSI

Director

Ledyard Parks and Recreation Department
Ledyard Senior Center
12 Van Tassell Drive
Gales Ferry, CT 06335
860-464-9112

www.ledyardrec.org



From: paul.l.pickenjr@gmail.com <paul.l.pickenjr@gmail.com> **On Behalf Of** Ledyard Youth League Football
Sent: Wednesday, October 4, 2023 4:32 PM
To: Jay Hartling <jhartling@ledyard.net>
Cc: Board of Education <boemembers@ledyard.net>; Scott Johnson <Scott@ledyardrec.org>
Subject: Re: Responding to Concerns Regarding LYL Football Micros

Good Afternoon Jay,

I apologize for the delayed response. We appreciate your offer of help and support. Since this time, we've reached a suitable and logical agreement that the Glacken family is happy with especially in response to Isabella who is a valuable member of our football community. We appreciate any continued support we've received from the schools - and from yourself personally in this regard. If there is anything we can do to help and/or collaborate in the future, please know that we stress the value of education to our student athletes and are always willing to assist in any way possible as well.

Thank you,
LYL Football

On Mon, Oct 2, 2023 at 7:56 PM Jay Hartling <jhartling@ledyard.net> wrote:

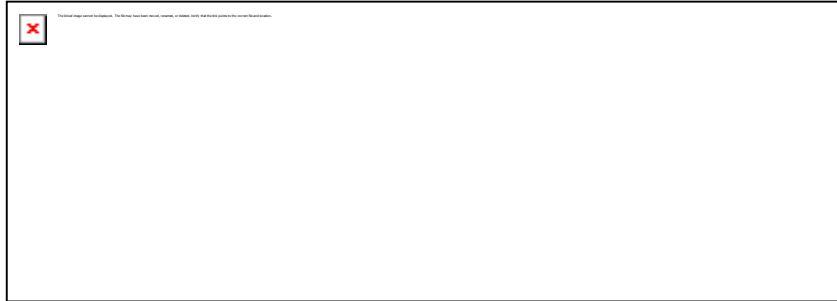
LYL Executive Board,

This information was shared with the Board of Education and myself. As you know the Board of Education/Ledyard Public Schools has no involvement with the LYL organization or manner in which you conduct your business, nor will I or the district weigh in, question or otherwise get involved with your organization's choices or management. All that said, if I can be of assistance within the purview of my role as Superintendent please reach out.

Best, -Jay

Jason S. Hartling
Superintendent
Ledyard Public Schools

“Believing in the unlimited potential of every student”



----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Nicole Cruz** <msphoenixcruz@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Oct 2, 2023 at 2:25 PM
Subject: Fwd: Responding to Concerns Regarding LYL Football Micros
To: <BOE@ledyard.net>, Jay Hartling <jhartling@ledyard.net>, Scott Johnson <scott@ledyardrec.org>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Nicole Cruz** <msphoenixcruz@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Oct 2, 2023 at 2:16 PM
Subject: Re: Responding to Concerns Regarding LYL Football Micros
To: Ledyard Youth League Football <ledyardyouthleaguefootball@gmail.com>

Good afternoon,

I appreciate the swift response but unfortunately, I cannot fully agree with all of the sentiments/reasonings expressed. The use of the word “personal” is not a substitute for unfounded or unreasonable. The importance of knowing our family and players (perhaps especially Bella) is knowing the time and effort we’ve dedicated to the LYL, and how my husband and I continue to advocate for all of the Micros players and their families. We know many people personally but never have asked or expected preferential treatment based on prior existing relationships. Sadly, this is not the first time living in Ledyard that I have been put in the position to make clear the difference between right and wrong when those in power have been the ones appearing to make decisions based on personal feelings/relationships. Rather than simply following codes of conduct, bylaws, etc. or mantras clearly expressed by the very bodies who seem to need the most convincing that they are in fact charged with adhering to, I have had to work twice as hard to ensure to the best of my ability that the kids come first. As “student athletes”, these are all the same children who attend Ledyard Public Schools, camps, and practice/play on fields managed by Ledyard Parks & Rec, there seems to be an obvious difference between what we teach/preach in certain areas of their lives (school) as opposed to others (sports), as it relates to the particular situation at hand. As such, I am formally requesting representation from Ledyard BOE (other than Mr. Favry) and P&R at tomorrow evening’s meeting. This has evolved into a larger issue wherein it deserves to be noted how our

children are being “coached” and how that impacts their performance in school, playing a sport during a season that also coincides with the beginning of the school year. While it was our choice, we were left with no other option other than to pull our children from LYL as we were unwilling to compromise their social/emotional wellbeing for unhealthy attempts to achieve “wins”.

If what is being conveyed is that there is no issue then I’ll assume that it’s ok to bring my kids back tonight and I’ll see you then. Again being stuck between a rock and a hard place, I cannot continue to see my kids suffer at home missing a sport that they love so much. Given the ongoing communication, I expect that my kids will be received without hesitation, and will be coached safely and responsibly. If I wait until next month, then our children will have their entire season taken from them.

Nicole Cruz-Glacken

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 1, 2023, at 4:50 PM, Ledyard Youth League Football <ledyardyouthleaguefootball@gmail.com> wrote:

Good Afternoon Nicole,

First and foremost, as a league, we respect your families choices to do what you believe is in the best interest of your family and athlete. As a board and as a league we value each and every student athlete in our program but recognize that as parents we do occasionally have to make tough decisions in what we believe is best for our children. You are correct that both our president and vice president have resigned as well as our equipment manager. These roles have been since filled this week in accordance with our bylaws. It is regretful to us that the decision that you believe is best for your family is to pull both Isabella and CJ from the program. Please also respect that we have to review each issue that is raised on a case by case and impartial basis as is our collective role. We can not and should not react in knee jerk fashion whenever an allegation is made. This is a board and league made up of volunteers who give their time for various reasons. Every board member here knows your family and cares deeply for them.

With the above being said, when investigating the issues that are raised we can't be affected by our own personal feelings on a particular matter. With our newly appointed board members (one position is being covered on an interim basis since it is up for election in a month) we are working to bring the new board members up to speed on the issues and monitor the situation closely as well as continuing to keep an eye on any issues at all levels of our program.

Thank you,
LYL Football

On Sun, Oct 1, 2023 at 7:55 AM Nicole Cruz <msphoenixcruz@gmail.com> wrote:

Good morning,

I am writing to inquire as to any possible resolutions that may have been reached by the LYL Football Board regarding the numerous complaints made against micros head coach Deon Bransford. Although my husband and I have since removed 2 of our children from the program (and Chris G. was relieved by the HC) following what we believed to be questionable responses to multiple families’ concerns, I feel that we are still due a formal and detailed explanation as to the former and present state of events within LYL. Given the details of the accusations brought forth, it seems apparent that any reasonable authoritative body would be in agreement. We deserve closure after the experiences our

family personally endured that began last season and immediately continued at the start of this season. To my knowledge, the vice president and president have both resigned, furthering complications and impeding the process of reaching reconciliation, and as such, casting a larger shadow of doubt surrounding the LYL authoritative body of leadership.

Nicole Cruz-Glacken
516-362-8426

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 21, 2023, at 11:29 AM, Ledyard Youth League Football
<ledyardyouthleaguefootball@gmail.com> wrote:

Goodmorning Nicole,

We appreciate the feedback. Your email has been received and is under review with the Executive Board.

Thank you,
LYL Football

On Mon, Sep 18, 2023 at 5:14 PM Nicole Cruz <msphoenixcruz@gmail.com> wrote:

Respectfully, I believe this response is unacceptable and inappropriate given the details of each set of parent's concerns. These issues have BEEN ongoing and have impacted our children, whole families, and coaching staff. How could we not take this personally? Our children should be the number one priority of all the adults in the room. If one of our children was behaving in a manner that required parent intervention, I think we would be expected to get involved and work with the coach on some resolution. However, when we as parents have bravely come forward with legitimate concerns, we have been met with vagueness and passivity. We were stood up at a LYFL meeting where both the president and vice president were absent and left the rest of the board holding the bag. Having the continual need to assess the current situation has led me to believe that some are just trying to avoid confrontation or save face. It is inevitable that those who choose leadership positions will have to make reasonable decisions that may sometimes be difficult ones to make. This comes with the territory. Taking on such positions shouldn't double as a way to be seen or in an effort to pursue personal or political ambitions. Even the appearance of that potentially being an intention is enough to cast a shadow of doubt. Now that we are being asked to basically just get over it, I will make no effort to conceal that I feel like I and other parents are being taken for a ride. We were never even given the courtesy of attending a rescheduled meeting. I had to go as far as speaking on this matter at last night's BOE meeting. I find it insulting that the chair of that body, who also doubles as the president of LYFL took the time to read policy regarding "personal attacks" during the aforementioned meeting. The message that is heard loud and clear is: we the people should have no standard of accountability for those who choose the roles that require them to act in a manner that would then cause us to have faith in those same people we entrust our children with. We may not know you personally, and that is the initial step of faith we take when we allow you to have influence over our children. When that faith is depleted due to our trust continually being broken, and effective action is not

taken, it is a dismissive act of gaslighting to ask us to have "trust and faith in our league".

I began writing this email in response to the email sent to us from LYFL and prior to and since then (a matter of a week) there have been other troubling situations that have occurred. This includes and may not be limited to what I will further share. It was agreed upon between the HC and parents willing to volunteer their time and resources to make a banner for our first home game. Our team mom and another mother who was already volunteering with concessions were working to have all of the kids sign the banner that they would run through when being announced onto the playing field prior to the start of the game. Upon the 25 minutes late arrival of HC and his son (also our qb), the two moms attempted to signal the player over to sign the banner, at which point HC began to yell at him to get on the field. At that time, the mother who ran down from concession to help with the banner attempted to inform HC that they were only trying to include the player by asking him to sign his name. HC then began to yell at them exclaiming something to the effect of "my kid doesn't listen to you, my kid listens to me!" Perhaps this explains why when our qb ("his kid") was told how much his purchase from a fundraiser (a local business donated food) was, he responded by asking "do you know who I am?". Furthermore, this same player was approached by my daughter during practice last Thursday when she was forced to advocate for herself because there are plays designed in which she is a receiver, however, she doesn't get thrown the ball. Out of frustration (even though there are adults on the field), she asked him if he doesn't see her when she's wide open and for some reason had to remind him that she's a receiver as well. He then condescendingly asked her if she was indeed a receiver and when she replied "yes", he laughed at her. This was in part why I chose to approach HC along with coaches Travis and Chris M. following said practice. I would like those holding seats on the board to explain to me how it is that we can put expectations in writing that we expect our kids to be held accountable to when they have a HC that is the embodiment of all that is antithetical to the morals we claim to be instilling in them.

My daughter was visibly upset when I picked her up from practice last week due to what I stated above. Initially, she told me that she was irritated bc HC will ask the team questions like "are you going to go home and play video games?" or "will you eat junk food and drink soda?", and if just one player answers yes (which happened numerous times), they are all made to run. I hope you can see how this is an unnecessary frustration being experienced by our children who continually show up for their team due to the fact that they are being coached by someone who uses valuable practice time to create situations wherein he takes the opportunity to hand out punishments being disguised as hard work or team comradery building. At this time, I also request that the Board relay to all teams that parents have the expectation for practice to end as posted on our schedules. The children do not transport themselves to practice, and if we're asked to respect the time of others then that should be a two way street, and I for one do not expect to sit in the parking lot for any longer than it takes for my kids to walk off of the field and remove their gear. We have families, jobs, and other responsibilities too. Friday's practice ended with the Micros on the hill with the "L". There they were given a lecture by HC. This talk included the children being told that winning is all that matters and being told they need to ignore "the noise" coming from parents in the stands because he will "handle it" and they should only be listening to him. These children are clearly more self-aware than their HC as is evidenced by them expressing concern for Bella after suffering from heat exhaustion and recognizing that their own HC gave her no

recognition. As many of them are equally as aware of the current toxicity spreading through their team and that some of their own parents are still and have actively been pursuing appropriate resolutions, it is one of the greatest acts of disrespect for an adult to use our children as an audience to convey just how much disregard he has for their parents. Yet, the HC recently provided us with an email with documents attached wherein one rule is that players are expected to have respect for all adults, and most importantly their families. Continuing on the same night, HC also took the opportunity to have a soap box moment, again with our children as unwilling participants being forced to listen to their HC air his grievances regarding LYFL. What started out as some sort of history lesson about the "L" turned into a speech about what LYF used to be, how somewhere along the way something happened (went wrong), and that they (the Micros) were going to be the team to get it back to what is used to be/fix it. It is highly inappropriate for our children to be used in this way and is not even a matter of football but now about a larger issue of our children being influenced by an adult whose intentions are severely misguided and those with the authority to take action on their behalf allowing this to continue.

When I approached the coaches on Thursday I began by stating multiple times "I am coming to you as a mother". After asking if my child was safe with them and if I could trust them with my daughter, I was unable to get much else in. As I continued to speak the HC began speaking simultaneously, and when it was evident that this was not clear communication in action, I stated that "I am not going to yell, and I'm not going to speak over you" as I had no choice but to elevate my voice in an effort to be heard. Eventually, I walked away after a very brief moment of silence when the HC asked me what my concerns were. As I began to express my concern over "shadiness" he stated that he doesn't involve himself in shadiness and said as a matter of fact that the events transpiring on the field are in fact not. This was just after I had the conversation with my daughter about the excessive punishments and being disregarded as a receiver, so as I was walking away I asked him "how do you know?". I then stated that the issue was a failure in leadership and the behavior amongst players on and off the field are a direct result of poor behavior from adults trickling down. This is not an influence that I can continue to allow to have such a negative impact on my child. Although he has stated in the past that he does not engage in petiness, this sentiment could not be anything further from a continuation of lies and the ongoing manipulation of the Micros team to elevate his own self interests, including elevating his own children. As stated in a previous email, my daughter (Bella), was back-up qb last season and qb'd all of the B games on her own. This year, she is not qb'ing at all and neither is she being given any play time during B games to work on other underdeveloped skills. The team as a whole completes significantly less reps during practice than the Juniors and Seniors. This is due to lack of planning and poor time management. Not only are the Micros losing out on valuable practice time but individual players are being slighted when they appear to pose a threat to the positions of preferred players. As in the additional case of another player being denied the opportunity to even hold the position of qb when their parent advocated for their child to have a fair chance at competing for the role. Apparently, everyone's position is theirs to lose except for the HC's kid.

For the record, I have made every attempt to avoid naming or otherwise identifying any children, other than my own, as there is something about doing so that feels inherently wrong to me. However, in alignment with the typical behavior exemplified by the Micros HC, his further infractions serve as a catalyst to feeling all but forced to speak on specific matters that I never intended to. The lack of transparent and

meaningful decisions being made has created an environment that calls for further action to be taken by those, like myself, who had faith that these matters would be addressed properly. I am dismayed that to the contrary, the process of pursuing resolution has been obstructed. Parents should have been notified as soon as it was made known that both the LYFL President and VP would not be in attendance during the 9/7/23 (what turned out not to be) meeting. I would think that a President, especially one who also serves as the Chair of Ledyard BOE, would know and therefore officially cancel the meeting and subsequently reschedule another. Instead, I and other parents are still waiting for the opportunity to address and hear from the board as a whole and officially. To my knowledge, the VP refused to act in an attempt to avoid getting involved in "in-fighting" but has not officially resigned. Does LYFL have a VP? If so, why is it acceptable to refuse to act according to the responsibilities of VP and still hold the position? If not, is there an active search for a new VP so that the business of the board can continue without prolonged delay? It seems apparent that this is being put off with hope that it just goes away.

For all of the reasons that I have made plain, not including those I don't have the energy to revisit yet again, along with the unresolved complaints made by other parents...my husband and I have decided to pull Bella from LYFL. It has been a painstaking process to arrive at this decision that we know will break her heart. We've tried to navigate how to keep our child both happy and healthy in what has proven to be an impossible situation. I cannot continue to leave my child in the hands of someone who has proven his lack of respect and empathy for her and our family. I cannot so easily have trust and faith in an ineffective system characterized by secrecy, alliances, fear and threats. I do not have confidence in an organization that in part refuses to take action based on threats made by anyone. I have first hand knowledge of the Micros HC making threats that include but are not limited to stating that if he goes then he will take "his people" with him. He has conveyed via text that he believes that the situations at hand simply come down to how much "influence" he has and has made clear that any time there is an attempt to hold him accountable for his actions, he will hurl threats and inevitably avoid accountability. He has been proven to be successful to that end. For that reason and all of the others, we are also pulling our son CJ from Seniors. Lastly, I feel that you all should know what this will look like for our family. We still have to have these conversations with Bella and CJ. Undoubtedly, we will have to deal with our daughter's hard feelings when she's reminded of what she's lost when she plays football with her former teammates during recess. I have already decided to keep her home on Friday since it will be the first time she would have to be faced with seeing her former teammates in school wearing their game jerseys. Perhaps the board should consider informing the parents of Micros on the loss of their teammate as I know their children will have questions/comments and they can be better prepared to have that conversation with them, as opposed to mine being bombarded in school and left to deal with those interactions as well. Fortunately, I feel comfortable with and trust Bella's teacher and the military child support staff (who I have to inform) to provide her with the extra support that has been made necessary to seek. Speaking of my daughter being an active duty military dependent, one of the last things the HC referred to my husband as (as HC was 'firing' him) was a "transplant". I'd like to take a moment to remind our community that us "transplants" and our families are specifically living in Ledyard, CT and neighboring towns due to military orders that we work our entire lives around. How many children does he coach that are "transplants"? Is it safe to assume that half of this battle is won by knowing he thinks of my daughter as a disposable "transplant", and may therefore explain his lack of

empathy for a 9 year old child who has dedicated herself to this sport in a more honorable way than he ever has? Take a good look around during our next home game when former and current military service members stand at attention as they face the flag, and you will easily be able to identify all of the "transplants".

I'm not apologizing for but do acknowledge that this is a lengthy email, and as such, I have no desire to proof read one more time since this has taken up a majority of my day. If I have been redundant or unclear in any way that leaves room for clarification, please feel free to reach out to me. I only have authority over my children, but you all are charged with ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all of those that remain under the leadership of the Micros HC. I pray that you find it in your hearts to do what is best for them and their families, as we have had to do for ours.

Nicole Cruz-Glacken
516-362-8426

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 12, 2023, at 10:45 PM, Ledyard Youth League Football
<ledyardyouthleaguefootball@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Parents,

First and foremost, as the LYL Executive Board we feel that every child in our program is a valuable member of the league. We strive to create an environment for all children to thrive and learn the game of football as well as the valuable life lessons that can be taught through the sport that can empower your child(ren) throughout the rest of their lives. We strive as a league to create the family environment that fosters a lifelong bond with their teammates and the league that we see through many of the families that return with their children as well as in official capacities to help continue the legacy that they themselves were a part of while also welcoming new members into the Ledyard Football family.

The LYL Executive Board met on multiple occasions inclusive of 06Sep23 to thoroughly review the issues that have been raised regarding our Micros program and the information that was provided. Our Vice President of Football has met with or spoken to a number of parents in regards to the issues and concerns that have been raised. The feedback, issues raised and concerns received via email, the general forum that was held on 07Sep23 and other methods of correspondence and discussion both public and private in nature. The LYL Executive Board has thoroughly vetted the above and solicited parents and coaches independently for additional feedback. Any additional correspondence received since that time, as of this email, have also been reviewed and acknowledged. It is our role and responsibility as a board to take in this information, provide a thorough investigation, gather additional insights and feedback – and finally to reach a

fair and balanced decision regardless of any personal emotions on a given subject.

Following the review of the information that has been provided to the board, the board has agreed unanimously on the recommended approach and guidance has been issued to the Micros coaching staff via the Head Coach. This direction provided included the clear expectations of the league and the Executive Board in regards to immediate actions that need to be taken, inclusive of a parents meeting to provide clear communication regarding approach to coaching, approach to playing time, communication with parents and team members and more. As a league, we strive for ongoing, frequent and open communication between our Head Coaches and the parents and that this communication take place via parent meetings and electronic communications. We have provided the tools in place to help facilitate this communication across the league and on a team by team basis.

As valued members of the Ledyard Youth League family, we hope and trust that a time to move forward and heal can be sought from all parties including trust and faith in our league.

Sincerely,

LYL Executive Board