

Little league coach quits after 8 phone threats

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Instead of three strikes, a South Farmington baseball coach is out after eight threatening phone calls.

Gerald Marchel, who coached 11- and 12-year-olds in the South Farmington Bronco league, has quit in fear for his family's safety after a series of calls to his home and workplace.

The calls date back to March and have made references to harming himself and his son, who plays on the Yankee Bronco A team Marchel coached.

"When you coach, you'll have differences of opinion," said Marchel, who lives in Farmington, "I could always handle it until this. When they threaten my wife and my kids, it's time to get out."

The coach quitting has some parents and players upset. South Farmington Baseball president Roxanne Fitzpatrick called an emergency meeting May 10 of the board of directors over the incident.

A report has been filed with the Farmington Public Safety department. Marchel doesn't know who's the caller; he just wants it stopped.

Marchel said he received the first calls before the league's annual draft. The caller told him not to pick certain players for this year's team.

The last call came May 7, when a male voice said, "You better watch what you're doing. You better not hurt my buddy. . . . It's a shame if your kid gets hurt during a game."

Said Marchel: "If anything happened to him, even if it was an accident, I don't know if I could handle it."

Fitzpatrick said such emotions are not uncommon in youth baseball. Though, she added, this is the first time she can remember an incident like this.

"You've heard of the little league syndrome?" asked Fitzpatrick. "That whole thing is still there. You can't believe what some of these are parents (are) like."

"They seem like very nice people. Then you get them on the ball field and they start ranting and raving."

An angry parent, who asked that he should not be used, thinks it's more than hysterical parents involved here. She said the threatening calls are the result of a

league that has become overly competitive and too politicized.

"I think the coaches have gone way overboard," said the woman, whose son plays on the Yankees. "It's win-win with them all the time. They've lost sight of why the kids are out there in the first place."

She added she's sorry to see Marchel quit.

Marchel wouldn't comment on whether he thought another coach is behind the phone calls. He said Bronco League director Dennis Heraghty and Fitzpatrick have been very supportive.

"To my knowledge I have never had a parent complain in my life," said Marchel, who has coached in the South Farmington Baseball League for eight years. "I never had a complaint from a parent. People are saying I'm a good coach. I'm more interested in a kid's self-esteem than winning."

Fitzpatrick agrees: "He's a great coach. He's a real big guy. He plays all the kids. . . ."

The incident has Marchel upset. He said he doesn't feel he can even watch his son play.

"I've never had a problem like this in my life," he said.

Accident causes serious injuries to Redford man

A Redford Township man was seriously injured Saturday after being broadsided by a pickup that had run a stop sign.

The accident happened during the afternoon at Halsted and M-102. The Chevy truck, driven by a Livonia man, travelling south on Halsted near the entrance to M-102, slammed into the Honda Civic.

The "Jaws of Life" had to be used to pull the driver from the Honda. He was taken to Botsford Hospital with two collapsed lungs and a crushed rib cage.

The driver of the pickup didn't suffer any serious injuries. Both drivers were wearing seatbelts. Alcohol was not involved.

POLICE/FIRE CALLS

Listed below are some of the Farmington area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week.

FIRE

A stove fire in a residence on Colfax in Farmington Hills May 14 was caused by grease which caught fire. The fire, which caused \$30,000 in damage to the contents of the house, had been extinguished when firefighters from station 1 arrived.

REPORTED CHILD ABUSE

A resident of Meadowglen subdivision in Farmington Hills reported that a family friend struck her 6-year-old daughter across the back of the legs with an electric cord on May 12. Police are investigating.

THEFTS

Wheel covers from a 1992 Pontiac parked on Chester in Farmington Hills worth \$500 were stolen May 13-14.

Four wheel covers worth \$200 were stolen from a 1988 Chrysler LeBaron parked on Hampton Court in Farmington Hills May 13-14.

Four wheel covers worth \$200 were stolen from a 1991 Chrysler LeBaron parked on Chester in Farmington Hills May 13-14.

Wheel covers worth \$200 were stolen from a 1987 Oldsmobile parked on Fairmont in Farmington Hills May 13-14.

Three ladies diamond rings worth \$1,075, \$1,250 and \$1,500; a watch; a herringbone chain worth \$195; and a bracelet worth \$685 were stolen from a residence on Pleasant Valley in Farmington Hills May 14.

A steam cleaner worth \$2,000 was stolen from a residence at the Independence Green Apartments on Polk in Farmington Hills May 12-14.

An AM/FM stereo worth \$450 was stolen from a 1978 Pontiac LeMans parked on Clubhouse Lane in Farmington Hills May 15. The car was unlocked at the time.

Wheel covers worth \$100, fishing equipment worth \$150 and a tackle box and equipment worth \$250 were stolen from a residence on Tulane May 15-16.

VANDALISM

A color TV, kitchen table, dresser and head board at a residence on Jacksonville in Farmington Hills sustained \$580 in damage May 14.

Outdoor light fixtures at a residence on Sugar Spring in Farmington Hills were damaged May 15, causing \$200 in damage.

AUTO THEFT

A 1989 white Ford Mustang worth \$11,500 was stolen from Mr. Sports on Orchard Lake May 15.

A 1992 white GMC Jimmy worth \$10,000 was stolen from the parking lot of the Target store on Grand River May 16.

A 1974 Dodge Challenger was stolen from the parking lot of the Gap on Orchard Lake May 16.

A 1989 gray Nissan worth \$7,000 parked on Lincoln court was stolen May 13-14.

ASSAULT

A 60-year-old man who lives on Heritage Hills in Farmington Hills reported being shot in the right arm by a neighbor on May 15. The neighbor said he was sorry and then left. Farmington Hills Police are investigating.

Two 14-year-old boys were arrested for felonious assault as a result of a fight involving four teens at a residence on Kenwood in Farmington Hills on May 12. One resident reported \$250 in damage to the door frame of his residence. A butcher knife was found in the yard by Farmington Hills Police.

BREAK-INS

Spoked hubcaps worth \$300 were stolen from a 1988 Cadillac DeVille during a break-in of the car at the Orchard Lake Condos on Orchard Lake in Farmington

Hills May 14-15, causing \$300 in damage.

Tanfastener on Grand River in Farmington Hills was broken into between May 15-16 causing \$200 in damage.

A stereo worth \$400 was stolen from a 1989 silver Ford Taurus parked at Botsford Hospital on Grand River May 16. The lock was popped causing \$100 in damage.

An AM/FM cassette radio worth \$400 and cassettes worth \$50 were stolen from a blue 1990 Cadillac parked at the Kendallwood Apartments on Kingsgate Way in Farmington Hills May 10-17 causing \$125 in damage to the driver's side window.

A stereo and speakers worth \$200 were stolen from a red 1985 Ford Ranger parked on Parker in Farmington Hills between May 16-17. The break-in caused \$500 in damage to the pickup.

A break-in of a blue 1990 Cadillac DeVille parked at the Kendallwood Apartments on Glen Cove in Farmington Hills caused \$700 in damage to the windows and resulted in the loss of an AM/FM stereo system worth \$750.

A stereo worth \$800 was stolen from a 1992 Mercury parked on Summit in Farmington Hills May 16-17 causing \$600 in damage to the driver's side door and lock.

A stereo worth \$150 was stolen from a white 1993 Ford Taurus parked at the Radisson Hotel on Grand River in Farmington Hills May 17 causing \$100 in damage to the driver's side window.

An \$800 stereo was stolen from a 1993 Mercury Sable parked at the Summit Apartments on Summit in Farmington Hills between May 16-17 causing \$600 in damage to the car.

LURIN A CHILD

A 10-year-old student at Gill Elementary was asked by a white man, 5 feet 9, in his 40s, with black hair, gold-rimmed glasses and a gray working uniform, to come over to his gray van as the boy was walking to school on May 12. The boy reported the incident to school officials.

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