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Football player at Staten Island's Wagner College expelled over burglary allegations, source says; second player suspended

By FRANK DONNELLY

A Wagner College football player, once Staten Island's top gridiron star, has been expelled for allegedly breaking into three dormitory rooms last month and stealing jewelry, electronic equipment and video games, the Advance has learned.

Another Wagner football player has been suspended for allegedly possessing two students' personal items.

Torian Phillips, 22, of Lockman Avenue, Mariners Harbor, was arrested Thursday and charged with burglarizing three rooms in Towers Hall at the Grymes Hill campus during spring break.

Two of the alleged thefts occurred on March 14, while the third took place sometime between March 12 and 14, said court papers.

According to those documents, Phillips snatched a gold charm and a gold chain with a gold cross pendant from one room. He sold the items later that day to a Tompkinsville jeweler.

Phillips also swiped several Xbox video games from a second dorm room and pilfered an Xbox hard drive and more video games from a third room, said court records. He peddled those items on March 14 to a Graniteville gaming store, court papers said.

Phillips admitted to selling the jewelry, electronic equipment and games, said court documents, which don't state how much money he made from the alleged transactions.

Phillips was slated to be arraigned Friday in Stapleton Criminal Court on six counts of felony burglary, along with four counts each of petit larceny and stolen-property possession, said a spokesman for District Attorney Daniel Donovan.

Another football player, Otis Wright, was previously arraigned on a lesser charge.

Wright, 20, of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., was arrested March 14 and accused of possessing a white piggy bank containing change, belonging to another student. He was also accused of possessing a second student's Tootsie-Roll bank.

Wright was arraigned March 15 on a misdemeanor count of stolen-property possession and released on his own recognizance, show online state court records. He was ordered back to court on May 28.

Prosecutors said Friday the investigation is continuing.

A law enforcement source said Phillips was expelled from Wagner, and Wright, a sophomore, was suspended.

Lee Manchester, Wagner's spokesman, declined comment, saying the school doesn't discuss student disciplinary matters.

According to The Wagnerian, the school's student newspaper, students were on edge after the thefts and security was beefed up.

Advance records show Phillips was a high school football star on Staten Island.

Playing slotback and defensive back for Port Richmond, he led the undefeated Raiders to the school's first PSAL city football championship in 2008.

Afterward, he received the Fred Fugazzi Memorial Award and the Fabbri Award. Those honors are given to the Island's best football player as determined by the borough's coaches and by Advance sportswriters and advisory board members, respectively.

Phillips went on to play for Syracuse University, but transferred to Wagner after one semester. He said then he wanted to be closer to his ailing grandmother and stepfather.

Phillips played cornerback for Wagner.

Wright, a running back, was named Wagner's special teams player of the year for the 2012 season.

Head football coach and athletic director Walt Hameline could not immediately be reached Friday for comment.

Telephone messages left Friday for Phillips, Wright and Phillips' lawyer, were not immediately returned.