

August 26, 2015

Jeff Lowell  
District Athletic Director  
Bellevue High School  
12111 NE 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
Bellevue, WA 98005

Dear Mr. Lowell:

My wife Allona and I are extremely outraged and concerned over the recent Seattle Times front page article published this past Sunday August 23, 2015. The article is false and misleading and our son Darien is misquoted, and his words were taken completely out of context. The reporters Josh Liebeskind and Mike Baker should be ashamed of themselves and what they have done here to our son and this kind of National Enquirer reporting is shameful and improper. My wife and I are furious.

First of all, contrary to the Seattle Times report, Darien does not have an uncle in Bellevue with a Bellevue address. That just is not true. The Seattle Times statement that "Because he lived in Sammamish, he said, he used his uncle's Bellevue address, a likely violation of state prep-sports rules" is patently false. Mr. Lowell, our son Darien grew up in the Bellevue High School attendance area, his older brother attended Bellevue High School. Darien played youth sports in Bellevue and he lived in the Bellevue High attendance area. Any and all reports to the contrary are false and the Seattle Times report here is wrong and again, my wife and I are furious and saddened by what is being said here. Mr. Lowell, it is not true.

In talking with our son who is very distraught over what was written and how it is being portrayed in the media both locally and nationally, he has been harassed by a disgruntled parent of a current student athlete at Bellevue High School and he has been hounded and harassed by these two National Enquirer type reporters from the Seattle Times trying to dig up dirt on the Bellevue Football program...it has been going on for months and it needs to stop. They came to him with false information, making false claims of things that they had uncovered about his family and his situation while he was at Bellevue High School and the Academic Institute. Mr. Lowell, they lied to him and they tricked him. They have twisted his words, taken them out of context, and painted a picture that is simply false. The article states, "Freeman's dad told him to thank head football coach Butch Goncharoff for helping pay rent". Mr. Lowell, that is completely false. I NEVER said anything of the kind to my son Darien and Butch Goncharoff NEVER gave me a dime for rent. NEVER. My wife and I work for a living and we did not ask nor receive anything financial from Butch. This is insulting to my wife and I and harmful to my family and the Seattle Times is going to hear from me about this. If the Seattle Times is going to quote me and put things I supposedly said into the newspaper, then they need to come to me and talk to me instead of harassing and bullying my son with false information and playing reporter games with him to get him to say things that he really has no actual knowledge of. Bottom line Mr. Lowell is that for the record, I want you to know that the Seattle Times article regarding my son is false....horribly false.

The article also states, "the summer before his junior year, Freeman said, Butch Goncharoff directed him to attend Academic Institute." Mr. Lowell, again that is simply false. Butch never went to my son and directed him or advised him at any time on where to go to school. Allona and I are the boy's parents and we decide where to send our children to school. The Seattle Times makes it sound like Allona and I

have no say in the education of our son and that we just let Butch and Darien decide that for us? Are you kidding me? Again, shame on the Seattle Times. Butch Goncharoff had NOTHING to do with our decision to attend the Academic Institute for his junior and senior years. We are Darien's parents and that is a decision that we made as we felt it was in the best interest of our child. We went through the proper procedures with the school and the school district to make that happen. Seeing things in the newspaper portrayed otherwise is very hard for us to bear.

The article then states, "Freeman said his his family could not afford the tuition at Academic Institute and doesn't know who footed the bill". Again, Allona and I did not and do not involve our teenage children with our financial information. Who does? Of course Darien would not know who "footed the bill" ...why would we tell him that? We are his parents. That's our issue to deal with, not our teenage son's. Not that it should have been anybody's business but our own, given the magnitude of this witch hunt by the Seattle Times and honestly what appears to be a witch hunt by the Bellevue School District, my wife and I have a very large family....and times were tough for us at that time financially. While it is really nobody else's business, we requested financial aid from the Academic Institute and it was granted by the Academic Institute. So while the Seattle Times article wants to paint a picture of misdeeds and dirty laundry, the truth is that we went through the proper channels and asked for help from the school that we wanted him to attend, and we will forever be grateful to the Academic Institute and Jennifer Vice for helping educate our son and for assisting us in our time of need.

This awful article by the Seattle Times then goes on to quote Darien as saying, "I was told I'm going here and everything is going to be taken care of". Boy, talk about taking things out of context. This is so bad by these reporters...awful. Of course I told my son where he is going to attend school and of course I told him everything is going to be taken care of. How and why the Seattle Times is taking that simple conversation out of context here is a perfect example of journalism at its poorest. This is trash.

Further, this horrible and un-factual article goes on to say, "At one point at the private school, Freeman said, he had a class with no instructor---he thinks the teacher quit midway through the semester. The school director, Jennifer Vice provided him with a book to learn from and later gave him test questions". The Times newspaper is trying to paint a false picture of the Academic Institute. Darien "thinks" the teacher quit? Hey...Seattle Times...seriously? You are basing your statement on what our teenage son at the time "thinks"? The "class" being referred to incorrectly by the Seattle Times here was when Darien was supposed to work on his homework. Our son was provided a quiet and safe place to work on his studies and his homework in between other classes. This wasn't one of his "classes" and portraying it otherwise is again, a complete work of fabrication on the part of the Seattle Times and a shameful misconstruing of the facts.

The article goes on to say, "In spring 2013, he stopped doing homework at Academic Institute altogether". "I'd still take notes in class because you'd be able to use our notes and stuff like that". The Times states that tests weren't too hard. What is the Seattle Times saying here....that our son, like many seniors, went on cruise control late in his senior year? Is that unique to our son? Isn't that referred to commonly as "senioritis"? For whatever it is worth, I'm glad he continued to take notes in class, and glad that he was attending class....and while I do not like to hear that Darien was skimping on his late spring 2013 senior year homework, that is a common practice amongst seniors and not unique at all to my son nor a reflection in any way on his school.

In closing, we chose to write to you as the portrayal of our son, the Bellevue football program and the Academic Institute is incredibly far off base and un-factual and their treatment of our son here is

reprehensible...and these reporters are now I suspect being patted on their backs... which is a travesty. These two guys should go and write articles for the National Enquirer and leave young people and their families alone. We will be sending this letter to the editor of the Seattle Times and we are extremely concerned about the ethics of their reporters here particularly with regard to our child. They are wrong here and they are damaging good people and a good school that serves a very good purpose for people who are in certain situations both educationally and financially. We ask that you give the Seattle Times article all the consideration it is due and realize that it is sensationalizing a situation and is hurting good people in the process through its poor journalistic tactics. Feel free to call me with any questions as I also have very serious concerns about the parent of the student who led these predator reporters to my son as that action is what initially led to all of these lies and misrepresentations of the facts to come out about our son and the Bellevue Football program and its coaches.

Sincerely,



Yusef Freeman  
[REDACTED]



Allona Freeman

cc: Bellevue School District 405 Board of Directors  
Butch Goncharoff, Bellevue High School  
Jennifer Vice, Academic Institute