The fights that erupted in and around East High’s stadium after a high school football game on Friday night again left Rochester City School District officials no choice but to change their plans for security at athletic contests. Members of the Rochester Police Department and school district officials met Monday, after a series of fights led to arrests and officers closing parts of Culver Road and East Main Street near the school. No details, including causes of the fights, were shared in a joint statement by district officials and the police department.

“Both the police department and the school district have a plan in place to provide for safety and security,” according a joint statement. “The actions of a few individuals following the game Friday night are absolutely unacceptable. “We will continue to work collaboratively with one another to ensure the safety of our student athletes and spectators at all district athletic events.” School board President Van White said the issue goes beyond the school district. “As I understand it, at least half the people involved were grown adults,” White said. “People have to not only think about what the school district or athletic department can do to address the issue. It’s not just schools — it’s malls, it’s festivals, it’s throughout the city and throughout the country, including suburban districts.”

There is frustration in the district’s athletic department that these and other incidents that reach the media are tied to its sporting events.

“I feel really bad about what happened,” East senior running back Freddie Brock said. “They are messing up our games. “We couldn’t go into the crowd (afterward) and say what’s up to our families. They are making it an unsafe environment.”

Fights broke out in the stands during a high school football game at the city of Rochester’s soccer stadium a year ago. None of the players were involved and members of the East High and Wilson teams stood together during the disturbances. Three people were arrested, while the game was suspended out of concerns for safety, then completed weeks later. That led to a meeting between city Mayor Lovely A. Warren, the police chief and district officials, then the decision: “Much like it currently does for other city special events, festivals and concerts, the RPD will now coordinate through the year with school officials to ensure these events have comprehensive security plans that include police input and approval.”

The district also changed the manner of how it sells tickets to students, plus added a requirement that schoolage children had to be accompanied by an adult for admission. The fights after the varsity football game between Irondequoit and East involved hundreds of kids, according to the Rochester Police Department. All of the Irondequoit players, coaches and officials were on buses leaving the stadium when the fights began, according to the West Irondequoit school district. “The ones who are already leaning toward a negative perception of the school district, it definitely affects them. It makes it worse,” 23year-old Rochester resident and Wilson graduate Jaquan McCullough said. “For those who understand, they know East High and the district are not putting kids out there, having them go out and fight. “Parenting is part of it, what is going on at home. A lot of those things are tied to poverty. I know people ... living in it, dealing with it. My mom was a little bit more fortunate than some, but it’s all tied together.”

McCullough, who graduated from Wilson Magnet in 2014, said there need to be more male mentors, who are welcomed back to the schools in the district. He said sometimes people who want to aid districts are not encouraged to return. “That’s discouraging,” McCullough said. “There’s no direct correlation between that and the fights, but it’s sad
because it plays a part in how we see things. “There needs to be more things at schools on how to conduct yourself in public. There’s not enough day-to-day life skills education.” The confrontations at around East High moved on to East Main Street and took about 50 officers an hour to disperse. Three juveniles and two adults were arrested for disorderly conduct.

Police said two officers were injured and treated for their injuries. Officers were hit with rocks, bottles and other items while trying to break up the fights, police said.

“We don’t have enough officers to arrest our way out of numerous fights. We just want order,” Rochester police Capt. Naser Zenelovic said at the scene. “We just want people to go home after enjoying the game and not come out here and ruin it, quite frankly, for everybody else who is here to enjoy a very competitive game at a beautiful stadium.”

Zenelovic also said then that the lawlessness was “very disturbing.”

McCullough said he left the game between Irondequoit and East before its conclusion. The fights were sad news for him, but not surprising, he said. “It’s the usual. It had nothing to do with the teams,” McCullough said. “East is starting to get more students engaged with the school, which is a great thing, but things are going to happen. “That might have carried over from something in school.” There is no choice but to increase the presence of security, McCullough said. “I feel they do a good job. I’m at a lot of city events,” McCullough said. “It’s what we’re living in today.

“It’s not OK at all, but it’s going to happen. It’s like training athletes, you’re not going to reach every kid. It’s sad.”

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