University surveillance system identifies suspects in attempted Halloween armed robbery

Published: Tuesday, November 2, 2010 6:10 AM CDT

University of Delaware Police have charged four individuals and are seeking a fifth person in connection with an attempted armed robbery of a UD student that occurred around 3:37 a.m. on Sunday, Oct. 31, at the intersection of North College Avenue and Ray Street.

Charged with second degree attempted robbery and second degree conspiracy were Brian T. Sanders, 21, of Wilmington; Richard F. DeMoss III, 22 of Newark; Alexis A. Pennington, 23, of Aston, Pa., and Kelli N. John, 20, of Wilmington. Sanders also was charged with third degree assault. In the incident, the student had just crossed over the pedestrian bridge from the Laird Campus, when police say Sanders got out of a Dodge Durango at the intersection of North College Avenue and Ray Street, rapidly approached the student and began assaulting him with his fists. He told the student he was “about to get robbed by Juggalos,” an apparent reference to an aggressive group that claims to be inspired by a song by the band Insane Clown Posse.

After being struck in the head, the student noticed four others getting out of the parked Durango, so he pushed the suspect away and began running toward Cleveland Avenue. Two of the men from the Durango gave chase, while continuing to make statements about taking the student’s money. They gave up and returned to the Durango.

After the incident was reported to University Police, an officer
searching for suspects saw the vehicle fleeing from the scene on Cleveland Avenue and noted the registration number. He was able to confirm the vehicle when he viewed surveillance video from the incident.

A computer check led University Police to a Stanton area trailer park, where Sanders and Pennington were apprehended in the Durango without incident. According to police, Pennington was driving during the attempted robbery.

Sanders and Pennington were taken back to the University of Delaware Public Safety Building where they were processed and later video arraigned at JP Court 11. Sanders was released on $5,000 unsecured bond, and Pennington was released on $4,500 unsecured bond, pending a preliminary hearing in the Court of Common Pleas.

Further investigation led to the identification of DeMoss and John. Police said DeMoss did not physically assault the victim but assisted Sanders in chasing him. John did not physically assault the victim but she exited the Durango in support of the attempted robbery and assault, police said. Demoss and John were arrested without incident on Nov. 1 and are awaiting arraignment at the time of this release. A fifth suspect has yet to be identified.

According to police, the suspects admitted jumping other students on Saturday evening, including someone dressed in a gorilla costume for Halloween.

“The initial assault, the five defendants and the suspect vehicle were all captured by the University's new Intelligent Campus Safety Video System, which is part of a significant investment the University has made in Public Safety technology and other resources to enhance the safety and welfare of our students, faculty and staff. As a direct result of this technology, four of the five suspects in this incident were charged, and the video evidence will be used during the prosecution phase of this investigation,” UD Police Chief Patrick A. Ogden said.