

On Monday morning, we arrived at The Beast and began a 45-minute to one-hour shooting workout. As the workout was ending, more people arrived and wanted to start a full-court game. Since we were only using half the court, we agreed to end our workout so that everyone could play together.

Initially, all the games were peaceful and calm. However, everything changed when the “Twins” arrived. They immediately began trying to dictate how we played, including specific rules and scoring. While some of us initially argued, Paris stepped in to calm everyone down, reminding us that it was just a game and we were there to enjoy basketball.

Danae was playing competitively, but from my perspective and the perspective of everyone else present—including some of the people on the opposing team—she did nothing outside of normal, competitive play. She played aggressively, but never disrespectfully or with any intent to harm. She did confront the Twins verbally by asking who they were talking to and why they were speaking to her in a disrespectful way, which could have come off as aggressive, but was understandable given the slurs and derogatory comments directed at her because of her gender.

Throughout this, Paris continued to calm everyone down, separating Danae from the Twins to deescalate the situation so we could keep playing.

A few possessions later, one of the Twins threatened Danae by saying, in effect, that the next time she played defense on him, he would put his hands on her to “teach her a lesson.” Everyone present was shocked, as Danae had done nothing to warrant that reaction. It seemed their frustration stemmed from the fact that our team, including Danae, was winning and they were embarrassed that a female player wasn’t backing down.

The Twins began calling multiple questionable fouls in a row—two or three possessions consecutively—to prove a point after one foul call on the other end. This behavior seemed rooted in their frustration over the fact that we were outplaying them.

Eventually, Danae continued to play solid defense, and we witnessed one of the Twins wind up and shove her with enough force to send her off balance across the court. Reacting instinctively to protect Danae, Paris immediately ran to her defense and struck the Twin who had pushed her.

I believe that if it were my own sister or mother in that situation, I would want someone like Paris there to stand up for them. I do not believe Paris acted out of malice; rather, he reacted to someone physically attacking a female player.

After the incident, the problem deescalated. We were able to continue playing basketball relatively normally despite ongoing trash talk from the Twins. Importantly, Paris remained calm, standing at the top of the key, speaking to them without hostility—even while both Twins stood in his face after the altercation.

I believe Paris's actions demonstrate his character as someone who cares about others and wants to maintain a safe, respectful environment. Suspending him for this incident seems excessive and unjust given that he was defending a teammate who was being physically threatened and attacked.

Signed:

Keyshaun Lawrence