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That Brawl? Elite Club Wants Nothing Said

By ANDY NEWMAN and CHRISTOPHER REEVE

Ozier Muhammad/The New York Times



The New York Athletic Club at 180 Central Park South.

The 144-year-old New York Athletic Club is known for its nurturing role in the history of American amateur sports, the hundreds of Olympic medals its members have won, and its fancy headquarters on Central Park South featuring squash courts, guest rooms, a library and a strict dress code.

It has no wish, apparently, to be known for an unscheduled fisticuffs session: a knock-down, drag-out, coed brawl that unfolded at the club's Tap Room in the wee hours of April 13 and ended with two people sent to the hospital and three men under arrest.

"I cannot state forcefully enough how abhorrent this event is to me," the club's president, S. Colin Neill, wrote in a letter to members on April 18. Then he got to the point:

"Distribution via the various social media of photographs and letters that are detrimental to the club and its reputation will not be tolerated. It is the responsibility of each and every member to protect and embellish the standing of the N.Y.A.C."

The club's attempt to bury the matter did not succeed. Last Friday, a witness account that had been making the rounds was posted on the blog Wall Street Jackass. "It was the best fight I've ever seen," the anonymous witness wrote. "Young people, old people, girls, members, nonmembers — it was a nondiscriminatory ragematch."

The witness's note says that the initial fight seemed to have commenced over a woman, and escalated into a brawl involving three fighting "wolf packs." Tables were overturned or moved to the room's periphery to create a "lion's pit" for the battle.

Other highlights, the witness wrote, included "probably 2 broken noses," "glasses thrown," a woman cut badly enough to require stitches and a "fat pudgy kid" who laid out a larger man with a blow to the head and was tackled by a crowd.

The police, who arrived after much of the dust had settled, confirmed only the arrests of three men: Peter Doran, 28, of Glen Head on the North Shore of Nassau County, charged with misdemeanor assault and accused of punching a 49-year-old man in the face; Matthew O'Grady, 31, of neighboring Glen Cove, charged with misdemeanor assault on a 48-year-old man; and Colin Drowica, 30, also of Glen Head, who was charged with attempted menacing. Mr. Drowica, a police spokeswoman said, grabbed a 58-year-old security guard's arm and "made some kind of aggressive motion with his fist to the victim, threatening physical injury."

There is a Colin Drowica listed on LinkedIn as a director at Knight Capital Group, and a brokerage database shows a Colin Drowica at Knight Capital who during a period of unemployment was based in Glen Head.

The Fire Department, which runs the Emergency Medical Service, said one man with a lacerated head was taken to New York Downtown Hospital and another man with unspecified injuries was taken to St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center.

Last Friday at the club, which costs \$8,500 to join and more than \$3,000 a year for a membership, James O'Brien, the director of communications, declined to confirm what the witness described as the "epicness" of the brawl, or much of anything else.

"We are not making any comment about anything," Mr. O'Brien said when asked about the brawl and the response letter. He then affirmed the club's policy of silence on internal matters — a policy reinforced by Mr. Neill in his letter to the membership.

"The club's constitution does not permit publicizing internal matters of the club, or otherwise undermining the private nature of the club," he wrote. Those who breach the club's norms "will be subject to disciplinary action."

A call to the club on Tuesday inquiring whether an episode involving the summoning of New York's Police and Fire Departments was really an "internal matter" was not returned.



We are excited to announce the debut of a new feature on City Room today: Kids Draw the News, in which we ask the children in the audience to render a current event in pictorial form.

Today's assignment: The spectacular brawl in the Tap Room of the New York Athletic Club. Please have your children-artists read the article or read/summarize it for them. Talking points: fancy restaurant/bar, men and women dressed up, people punching each other, throwing glasses, overturning tables, arrests. (I took the liberty this morning of asking my daughter to provide the example above.)

Scan the drawing and send it to us, using this submission form. Drawings by actual kids only, please, 12 years of age and under. Within a few days, we will present a gallery of the children's work.

Thanks!