

Two inmates face charges in pinning incident at jail

By Beth Burger

Staff Writer

Two Hamilton County jail inmates face new charges after a jailer was pinned beneath one while trying to escort him to a cell, according to arrest reports.

The jailer, Gene Planer, said his hand, back and neck were sore after he was knocked into a shower cell by a 215-pound inmate Sunday, according to the report.

"I could not stand up and asked [the] inmate ... repeatedly to let me up, but he continued to yell, 'You ain't supposed to touch me. Let me go,' while at the same time he was intentionally leaning backward to prevent me from getting/standing up from the shower," Planer said in the report. "I repeatedly during this time yelled for help."

Quadarius Bowling, 17, was leaving the chapel area on the sixth floor — where some of the most violent offenders are housed — when he ran from Planer to the other end of the hall, according to the report. Planer went after him and tried to take him back to a cell while Bowling yelled and resisted. Just as Planer was beginning to get him into a cell, the report said, Bowling jerked backward, knocking Planer down in the shower area.

Another inmate, 16-year-old Markel Mitchell, who was in the chapel, came to the door and began laughing, then slammed the door twice before running off, the report said.

Other jailers finally arrived to help, according to the report.

"We typically try to keep a minimum of two guards on the floor," said Hamilton County Sheriff's Office Deputy Chief Allen Branum.

Branum said fights among inmates and minor injuries to guards are fairly common at the jail.

"When you have people incarcerated, it brings out the worst in them sometimes," he said.

The sheriff's office has struggled to keep the jail adequately staffed after four deputies were suspended in connection with drug allegations. In addition, several deputies recently retired or were transferred within the department.

"There's a constant turnover," Branum said, and more jailers must work overtime to keep the jail running.

"A lot of these guys don't necessarily want the overtime," Branum said. "We don't like telling these guys, 'You have to step up and work.'"

Bowling is a validated member of the Athens Park Blood gang, and Mitchell is a documented associate of the gang, according to authorities. Approximately one-fifth of the jail population are validated gang members.

The incident between Bowling and Planer came two days after Sheriff Jim Hammond made remarks about handling gang members.

"We need to run them out of town, put them in jail or send them to the funeral home," he told the Brainerd Kiwanis Club.

Bowling, who was convicted of theft in July, received a two-year sentence and now faces a new charge of aggravated assault. His next court date is set for Tuesday before General Sessions Court Judge Christine Sell.

Mitchell previously was arrested in connection with the slaying of 27-year-old Jordan Collins, who was beaten to death with a crowbar in Red Bank last year. Mitchell was charged with criminal homicide and especially aggravated burglary in connection with Collins' death.

He now faces a new charge of accessory after the fact for the jail incident, and his next court date is set for Tuesday before General Sessions Court Judge Ron Durby.

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Quadarius Bowling