Arrests Made in Brutal Watessing Park Attack

Newark – Essex County Sheriff Armando Fontoura today announced the arrests of four suspects wanted for the violent assault and robbery of a 13-year-old boy at Watessing Park.
Sheriff Fontoura stated that the incident occurred at 4:45 p.m. on Tuesday. The victim, a resident of Bloomfield, was confronted by the suspects, two adult males and two juvenile males, all of East Orange. The attack took place under the railroad tracks at the park.

Fontoura said the victim suffered serious head injuries and was transported to Mountainside Hospital where he remains. He was conscious immediately after the attack then slipped into a coma.

During the attack, a cell phone and an IPod were stolen.

During questioning, the suspects indicated that they went out to rob someone on Tuesday night.

Taken into custody today were Frank McClain, age 18, Johnny Thomas, age 18, and two 17-year-old suspects.

“This was a crime of opportunity,” noted the sheriff. “The suspects left their victim for dead. Since the attack our officers worked around the clock to identify the suspects.”
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Sergeant Vito D’Alessio spearheaded the investigation. Working with Detectives John Goncalves, John Tully, James Bradley and Ignacio Mendez, the officers tirelessly canvassed the neighborhoods surrounding the crime scene.

Fontoura said the officers developed information that one of the juvenile suspects had possession of the cell phone. When they arrived at his address this morning to interview him, the stolen cell rang.

The juvenile admitted his role in the robbery. Subsequently, the other three suspects were located and arrested.

All four suspects are charged with aggravated assault and robbery.

McClain and Thomas were lodged in the Essex County Correctional Facility where they await arraignment in criminal Central Judicial Processing court. The two juvenile suspects were lodged in the Essex County Youth Facility where they await a hearing in Family Court.