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Manager says teen "Sopranos" star innocent of any wrongdoing

The teen "Sopranos" actor who portrays the troubled son of a mob boss had no idea that his friends had allegedly robbed two boys of \$40 and is "freaked out" over his brush with police, his manager said Thursday.

Robert Iler, 16, was arrested with three other youths early Wednesday on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Iler was charged with two counts of second-degree robbery and one count of marijuana possession. He pleaded innocent and was released on \$2,500 bail.

"This whole thing is a mixup, a crazy mixup," said Jeff Mitchell, Iler's longtime manager. "He didn't do anything - he's freaked out."

Mitchell also disputed police claims that Iler was joking around while in custody.

"He is not a wiseguy," Mitchell said. "It was the cops who were yukking it up."

Iler's lawyer, Steven Mintz, also disputed the allegations.

"My client didn't threaten anybody, my client didn't hear anybody threaten anybody, my client didn't hear anyone ask for money," Mintz said. "Robert didn't hear anybody or see anybody receive money. And he only learned what had happened much later when he was picked up."

Over the three-year run of the HBO hit show "The Sopranos," Iler's character, Anthony "A.J." Soprano Jr., has repeatedly found trouble: smoking pot in the family garage, vandalizing his high school, and cheating on a test.

HBO said in a statement Thursday: "We look forward to Robert joining us when 'The Sopranos' resumes production in the fall."

Iler's mother, Helen, told reporters it was the first time her son had been in real-life trouble - "and it will be the last."

Police said the oldest of the four youths, Michael Cournede, 19, approached the victims and ordered them to hand over their money. The other suspects allegedly threatened the victims if they did not comply.

The three other teens also had no criminal record, police said. Cournede and Alban

Selimaj, 16, pleaded innocent to two counts of second-degree robbery. The fourth suspect, a 15-year-old boy, will face charges in Family Court because of his age.

"What we have here is three kids who thought it would be fun to go out and do a robbery," Robert Wallach, an assistant district attorney, said at the arraignment.

Iler began his acting career at age 6, when Mitchell spotted him walking down a Manhattan street with his father. He was hired to appear in a Pizza Hut commercial. He made his first film - "The Tic Code" - when he was 10.