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WHEN DRILLS BECOME DANGEROUS

Federal lawsuit filed against Woodmore Local Schools after football player suffers traumatic brain injury after hazing

TOLEDO – A federal Civil Rights Action was filed today against Woodmore Local Schools and football coaches Britton Devier and Todd Bringman after torturous conduct against a Woodmore High School football player resulted in a traumatic brain injury. The case involves a 16-year-old victim represented by attorney Chuck Boyk and is assigned to Honorable Jeffrey J. Helmick in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio Western Division.

On September 10, 2013, Head Coach Devier and Assistant Coach Bringman organized and implemented an attack against players as part of an effort to punish and haze certain members of the football team for lack of “hustle”.

Due to the extreme heat, that day’s practice was planned as a “non-contact” practice, meaning the players were instructed not to wear their full uniforms; only helmets, shoulder pads, girdles with hip pads, and shorts.

When the players failed to complete their non-contact drills to the satisfaction of Devier and Bringman, they were ordered to return to the locker room and change into full uniforms, making sure to be back on the field within eight minutes. The players were also warned that failure to return to the field within the allotted eight minutes would result in severe consequences.

Of the approximately 45 players on the team, only 6-10 returned to the field within eight minutes. Those not returning in time were instructed to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in a single file line and were from that point referred to as “Old Woodmore”. The “New Woodmore” players were those who had made it back in time. The “Old Woodmore” players were instructed to “take a hit” before they could join the “New Woodmore” team, which is when the “New Woodmore” players were instructed to hit the “Old Woodmore” players as hard as possible. The “Old Woodmore” players were also forced to participate in the “Bull in the Ring” drill in which any behavior against the victim was allowed: grabbing face masks, pulling, pushing and hitting, among other acts.

The “Old Woodmore” players were not allowed to make any effort to defend themselves.

Our 16-year-old client was one of the “Old Woodmore” players who were hit with such force that he subsequently vomited, became disoriented, and collapsed, which are all tell-tale signs of a severe brain injury.

No ambulance was called.

Our client was unresponsive while his older brother and teammate drove him home. His parents immediately took him to St. Charles Hospital before he was transported via ambulance to St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center where he was ultimately diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury after spending the night in the Intensive Care Unit.

The football drills in question did not comply with the Ohio High School Athletic Association's guidelines regarding the reduction of head and neck injuries in football, which can be read on page 21 of the OHSAA Football Manual, accessed by using the link below.

[See OHSAA Football Manual \("Reducing Head and Neck Injuries in Football" can be found on page 21\)](#)

In reality, the dangerous drills are putting players at risk of severe brain injuries or worse conditions that prevent them from ever being able to play contact sports again. According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, traumatic brain injuries may increase a person's chance of developing Parkinson's, Alzheimer's or severe depression later on in life.

In light of the recent Super Bowl, we hope that parents take the time to talk to their child athletes about the types of drills that are being run during practice.

"Drills in any sport should be used as a tool to increase skill and performance, not to punish players," Chuck Boyk said. "When coaches use retaliation and punishment instead of encouragement to drive their drills, lines are quickly crossed and injuries occur."

The purpose of the lawsuit is to stress the importance of protecting child athletes, especially since their bodies and brains are still developing.

"Children are our most precious asset," Chuck said. "The vast majority of coaches run drills to improve a child's athletic ability, but for those few coaches that don't, the results can be devastating. Don't let the same senseless injuries as this one happen to your child on the field. Communicate with your child and communicate with their coaches. It could save your child's season, but more importantly their life."

[For a complete play-by-play of what happened on the day of the incident, read the official, file-stamped federal lawsuit against Woodmore Local Schools.](#)

The mission of Charles E. Boyk Law Offices, LLC is to help those injured by the negligence of others, while at the same time focusing on educating the community on how to prevent similar situations. Headquartered in Toledo, Ohio, Charles Boyk Law Offices has six locations to serve those in need of legal representation and we offer complimentary case evaluations to anyone living in or near northwest Ohio.

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For more information on this case or to schedule an interview, contact Anneke Godlewski, Communications Consultant, at 419-720-4456 (office), 419-283-5573 (cell) or agodlewski@charlesboyk-law.com.