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Tuesday, July 19, 2011

Boy dies at soccer camp

BOY, 12, COLLAPSES, DIES AT HOLDEN CAMP



Joshua Thibodeau

By Bronislaus B. Kush Telegram & Gazette Staff and Sandy Meindersma CORRESPONDENT
bkush@telegram.com

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HOLDEN — A 12-year-old Holden boy died yesterday morning after collapsing at a private soccer camp at Wachusett Regional High School.

Police said the youngster, identified as Joshua Thibodeau of 50 Highland St., collapsed about 9:50 a.m. and was taken by Holden Emergency Medical Services, with his parents, to UMass Memorial Medical Center — University Campus in Worcester, where he was pronounced dead about an hour later.

The boy was attending the Zalgiris Soccer Camp, which has operated at the school for several years.

According to District Attorney Joseph D. Early Jr.'s office, the boy was taking part in a low-speed drill with

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about 15 other campers when he collapsed.

Holden police and state police detectives assigned to the district attorney's office are investigating. The state medical examiner's office will perform an autopsy to determine the cause of death.

The camp is run by Markens Benoit, the varsity boys' soccer coach at Oakmont Regional High School in Ashburnham, and Jason Gaumond, the varsity boys' soccer coach at Wachusett.

Calls to Mr. Benoit were not returned.

This was the first of three weeks of day camps scheduled for soccer players ages 8 to 15.

Camp was canceled for the day yesterday but was expected to resume today. School officials said the camp, which was being held on the athletic field behind the school, was shut down shortly after the emergency.

Superintendent Thomas Pandiscio expressed his condolences to the family.

"This is a terrible tragedy," he said. "We are hoping we can be supportive to the family as they deal with this tragedy in their lives."

Two men, who were identified as coaches of the soccer camp by people associated with a basketball camp being held in the school gym, declined to comment when approached by a Telegram & Gazette reporter yesterday.

Relatives of youngsters attending the basketball camp said they were shocked by the death.

Terry Vigliatura of Holden, who was picking up her 12-year-old grandson, Matthew O'Connor of Holden, said parents always have some concern about their children getting injured in such activities, but added that they are not overly worried because of the training that staff receive.

She said, for example, that workers at properly run camps know how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation and participants are always being advised to drink plenty of fluids so they do not become dehydrated.

Lucas Woodward and Gaspar Esposito, who are soccer players at the school, said the sport is very popular among students in the region.

"Soccer is very successful and is expanding in this area," said Mr. Esposito as he practiced with Mr. Woodward on the field where the boy had collapsed about five hours earlier.

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