

NorthJersey.com

Heatstroke dangers worsen for school athletes; deaths are rising

Saturday, August 21, 2010

Last updated: Saturday August 21, 2010, 12:07 PM

BY JEFF ROBERTS

The Record

STAFF WRITER

As football camps open this week at high schools across New Jersey, Kyle Latorre's story serves as a cautionary tale about the perils of extreme exertion and extreme heat.

Now a freshman at Kean University, he nearly died a year ago from heatstroke.

Two-a-day practices for the Hasbrouck Heights football team had just begun when he was stricken. The next day, he was in intensive care at Hackensack University Medical Center, his mother keeping a bedside vigil, holding his hand amid all the wires and tubes that kept him alive.

Though extreme, Kyle's experience was not unique. In fact, statistics suggest that heatstroke is a growing problem despite heightened awareness of its dangers — the

Help people in need. 

Donate your car, boat or RV

Call Toll-Free

- Free Towing
- Tax Deductible

1-877-225-9384

advertisement

number of heat-related deaths from athletics is at its highest in four decades.

More than 40 football players nationwide have died of heatstroke since 1995, 31 of whom were high school athletes, according to the National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research at the University of North Carolina. Heatstroke claimed the lives of nine players just in 2008 and 2009 combined, the most in any two-year period since 1972-73, and 18 between 2005 and 2009, the most in any five-year stretch since the early '70s.

"It blows me away," said Douglas Casa, the chief operating officer at the Korey Stringer Institute at the University of Connecticut. "More medical staff is available, more information is out there, coaches in general have much safer ideas."

Locally, statistics are harder to come by. But area athletic trainers say Kyle was one of at least 10 North Jersey athletes to have suffered a case of heat illness last summer serious enough to require emergency-room care.

Advertisement

Let your passion flourish!

CAREER TRAINING

- * Fast, Convenient, and Flexible
- * Get a Job in Culinary, Fashion, Design or Other Hot Fields



Changing Lives
Through Education
Since 1987

SPEAK TO AN
ADVISOR

9 A.M. - 9 P.M. EST
1-877-688-6858



Print Powered By 

NorthJersey.com

Heat-illness expert David Csillan thinks the number of heatstroke deaths is even higher than reported. Heat illness is often an underlying factor in deaths attributed to heart problems, asthma or sickle-cell trait, according to Casa, an athletic trainer in Central Jersey who co-authored the National Athletic Trainers Association preseason heat-acclimatization guidelines with Csillan.

Yet the rising number of deaths has not been enough to reform heat guidelines in many states, despite an improvement in education among coaches.

"Unfortunately, I think it's going to take a few more catastrophic heat illnesses from our athletes before everyone figures this out," Csillan said. "I had one coach tell me, 'There are thousands of high school athletes playing every day. If one kid dies from heat illness, that's not a bad percentage.' "

Exertional heatstroke — hyperthermia due to strenuous activity in a hot environment, often aided by dehydration and humidity — drives body temperature to 105 degrees and above. Symptoms include elevated heart rate, hyperventilation, disorientation and loss of muscle function.

"It just happened like that. This is why I want

Get Proven, Proactive
IDENTITY
THEFT PROTECTION



LifeLock
 #1 in Identity Theft Protection*

Call Now 1-877-670-1746

advertisement

to tell kids the symptoms come like this," said Kyle, 18, snapping his fingers.

"Once you get these feelings, you have to get it taken care of right away because people end up like that, and if there's no one home for them, these kids could die."

Even in non-fatal cases, heatstroke can cause lingering problems, such as kidney and liver damage and blood clots. Kyle appears to have avoided permanent damage: At 6-foot-6 and 240 pounds, he plans to play basketball at Kean.

Shocking statistics

Athletic trainers and experts cite multiple factors that could explain the rise in deaths: the proliferation of artificial turf fields — which are often 10 to 15 degrees hotter than air temperature; the popularity of caffeine-based energy drinks that can dehydrate and

Advertisement

Help people in need.
 Donate your car, boat or RV
Free Towing ■ Tax Deductible



FREE
 3 day vacation to over
 80 destinations.

Call Toll-Free
1-877-225-9384



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

NorthJersey.com

raise heart rates and medications such as Ritalin that disturb thermo-regulation.

Some also say that today's youngsters are not accustomed to the summer heat.

"It doesn't shock me because when we were kids, we played outside all summer, getting our bodies acclimatized," said Mike Prybicien, the president of the Athletic Trainers Society of New Jersey. "What do kids do nowadays? They're inside, they're on the computer. Their exercise is playing on the Wii or Xbox."

Then they brave the summer heat and humidity wearing pads and a helmet.

To combat overheating, athletic trainers try to cool athletes down with everything from garbage cans and tubs filled with ice and water to hoses, sprinklers, fans and even special tents that have misting hoses built in, they said.

Prybicien, the Passaic High School athletic trainer, said he and a couple of other trainers discussed the issue at a football scrimmage last summer. They found that between them they knew of about 10 cases of heat illness just last preseason that required trips to the emergency room.

In June 2009, the NATA recommended

Help people in need.  Heritage for the Blind

Donate your car, boat or RV Call Toll-Free
 •Free Towing **1-877-225-9384**
 •Tax Deductible

advertisement

guidelines that included the elimination of two-a-day practices during the first five days of August — when heat stroke deaths often occur — and longer breaks between practices.

This spring, the NJSIAA adopted similar guidelines.

The New York State public schools association went a step further in May, requiring schools hosting a game or practice to check the heat index any time air temperature hits 80 degrees. A game or practice must be canceled if the heat index rises to 96 degrees or above.


Some athletic trainers weigh their football players before and after each practice to monitor their hydration.

"I've had kids who lost 13 pounds of water in a two-and-a-half-hour practice and maybe only regained five or six of it before the next practice," said Robb Rehberg, coordinator of athletic training clinical education at William Paterson University and a former Westwood

Advertisement

Eat Great, Lose Weight!

© 2009 eDiets.com, Inc. All rights reserved. epicurious is a TM of Conde Nast Digital. Redbook is a TM of Hearst Communication, Inc.



Call **1-888-378-3151**
and get a **FREE** week of meals plus
a **BONUS \$25 gift!**

eDiets
fresh prepared
meal delivery

Rated #1 best-tasting
by epicurious.com
"Best bang for your buck!"
- Redbook

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

NorthJersey.com

High School athletic trainer. "That's smoke right there before the fire."

Once heatstroke occurs, proper treatment is key.

"Heatstroke is 100 percent survivable," said Casa, who nearly died of it himself in 1985 when he was a high school runner. "People are still dying from heatstroke because they're not treating it correctly."

Had to be held down

Only fleeting images remain of that first night in intensive care for Kyle Latorre. He does not remember being held down by a hospital employee after almost pulling out IVs, or being unable to recognize his mother.

Kyle's blood pressure had crashed. His kidneys threatened to shut down, his mother recalls. Oxygen helped him breathe. His mother held his hands to comfort him and keep him from hurting himself as he became incoherent and combative.

Kyle had struggled through the first the day of football practice on Aug. 24, so much so

Let your passion flourish! 

CAREER TRAINING
 * Fast, Convenient, and Flexible
 * Get a Job in Culinary, Fashion, Design or Other Hot Fields

SPEAK TO AN ADVISOR
 9 A.M. - 9 P.M. EST
1-877-688-6858

Changing Lives Through Education Since 1987

advertisement

that Hasbrouck Heights athletic trainer Maria Abbatiello alerted his parents, she said. He could not make it through the next day's two-a-day practices, which were held in 90-degree weather — about 100 degrees on the school's artificial turf field, according to Abbatiello.

Kyle struggled to breathe, wheezing — which he thought was caused by his sports-induced asthma — and felt dizzy and exhausted. Then came cramps that locked up his entire body.

Abbatiello examined him and made him drink as he appeared to be dehydrated.

"It was a rare case. It's scary because it happens really quickly," said Abbatiello. "We did everything by the book. I've been there almost 10 years, and that was the first time I ever saw a kid get heatstroke."

Kyle's condition deteriorated after arriving home, and Debbie Latorre took him to his doctor, who diagnosed dehydration and sent him home. That's when Kyle began shaking

Advertisement

Send flowers for any occasion

Bouquets \$19.99
from **19.99** ^{+s/h}

ProFlowers®

Order ONLY at
proflowers.com/happy
 or call 1-877-888-0688



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

NorthJersey.com

and seeing spots.

"I was incoherent, and I couldn't really move. And I couldn't talk," he said.

His mother rushed him to the hospital. She remembers a nurse taking Kyle's temperature, but does not think they told her the reading. Her husband, Joe, rushed to join his wife at their son's bedside.

Doctors would not feel comfortable enough to predict Kyle's recovery for 12 hours after he was admitted, Debbie Latorre said. He did recover, playing both ways on the line for the Hasbrouck Heights team last season.

Kyle will study athletic training at Kean, inspired by the care he received.

E-mail: roberts@northjersey.com



PROTECT YOUR HOME
FREE \$850 Value!
Home Security System!
1-877-246-7519
 Mon-Fri 9am - 10pm - Sat 9am-7pm - Sun 11am - 6pm EST

advertisement

Advertisement



PROTECT YOUR HOME
FREE Home Security System!
\$850 Value!

CALL NOW and receive a **FREE** wireless remote control with **PANIC BUTTON!**

1-877-246-7519
 Mon-Fri 9am - 10pm - Sat 9am-7pm - Sun 11am - 6pm EST

At no cost to you for parts and activation with only a \$99 installation fee and the purchase of alarm monitoring services. Terms & Conditions apply.

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™