

What killed a high school soccer player who collapsed, died in June during conditioning?

ERLANGER, Ky. (WKRC) - Matthew Mangine Jr. was a 16-year-old who loved to play soccer. He was a rising junior on the soccer team at St. Henry High School and a member of the Kings Hammer Soccer Club.



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A big brother. A son. A friend. A teammate.

On June 16, he unexpectedly died just one day after practices began under the KHSAA's COVID-19 guidelines.

"These sorts of catastrophic injuries generally occur when there are firsts," said Dr. Riana Pryor, an expert on the environmental impacts on athletes. "That scenario of being the second day back, in a practice where they've had time off, they're running conditioning drills -- that is very common for this sort of catastrophic injury to occur."

Dr. Pryor researches the impacts of acclimation and environments on athletes. The coroner's report states that following a soccer conditioning session, Mangine fell to his knees, collapsed to the turf and was gasping for air. It also states Mangine had a history of exercise-induced asthma and an episode of syncope, or fainting, during soccer practice two to three years ago.

The coroner's report lists the chief complaint as "cardiac arrest." The medical examiner ruled his cause of death as "undetermined."

"This person, if they're suffering from this traumatic of an injury or an illness, eventually the heart will stop. So, you can always default to cardiac arrest because, at some point, the heart stopped before he died," Dr. Pryor said.

The six-page toxicology report tested for 63 substances. They all came back negative.

"It's just looking for other contributors that could have led up to the death," Dr. Pryor said.

The medical examiner's opinion says Mangine could have had a congenital heart defect or an abnormal chemical reaction in his body. Some of his organs were donated, including soft tissue and heart valves.

"That would make me think that this really wasn't a cardiac condition that they found," Dr. Pryor said.

Local 12 requested to speak with the medical examiner but was told he wasn't available for an interview.

The top three causes of sudden death in sports are cardiac issues, head injuries and exertional heatstroke.

On June 16, around the time Mangine was on the pitch, the weather was sunny, around 80 degrees and dry.

"In the summer, that order switches where heatstroke is the top priority or the biggest issue we see in sport regarding sudden death," Dr. Pryor said. "And if somebody dies from one of these conditions, this can be picked up on an autopsy."

So, with his death undetermined, what killed Matt Mangine Jr.?

On June 16, Matt was pronounced dead at 8:03 p.m. -- less than an hour after he collapsed.