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## Urgent Safety Alerts Issued After Heatstroke Claims Young Athletes

August 10, 2025

— Categories: Breaking News



Recent tragedies involving high-school football players Joshua Henderson, 16, from Tennessee, and Mikah King, 15, from Georgia, who died after collapsing during practice in extreme heat, have prompted nationwide calls for better safety measures. These incidents echo the 2017 death of Zach Martin, 16, who succumbed to heatstroke during a summer football practice in Florida. The losses have reignited discussions about preventing heat-related illnesses among young athletes, with experts and advocates emphasizing practical steps to avoid such outcomes.

Zach Martin's mother, Laurie Martin-Giordano, president of the Zach Martin Foundation, shared critical advice during a Thursday appearance on *Fox & Friends*. She stressed the importance of self-advocacy for athletes. "You need to ensure you're getting proper hydration, nutrition, and enough sleep, because coaches and teachers may not know your personal needs," Martin-Giordano said. Her son collapsed during practice with a body temperature of 107 degrees Fahrenheit and could not be saved, a tragedy she works to prevent for others through her foundation's advocacy.

Heatstroke, defined by the Mayo Clinic as a severe condition caused by the body overheating, often results from prolonged exposure to high temperatures or intense physical activity in hot conditions. It represents the most critical stage of heat-related injuries, with symptoms including a body temperature of 104 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, altered mental state, changes in sweating, flushed skin, nausea, rapid breathing, racing heart rate, and headaches. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that anyone feeling faint or weak during activity should immediately stop and move to a cooler environment.

Cooling the body is the first priority when heatstroke symptoms appear. Martin-Giordano emphasized that lowering a person's core temperature below 104 degrees Fahrenheit is critical, as the body loses its ability to regulate temperature at this threshold. "Start cooling immediately before heading to the hospital," she urged, noting that delays can cause irreversible internal damage. She explained that in cases like her son's and the recent deaths, the body often cannot recover from such extensive harm. Only after cooling begins should emergency services, such as calling 911, be sought.

To exercise safely in hot conditions, the Mayo Clinic offers several recommendations. Outdoor activities should be limited, particularly during the hottest parts of the day. Wearing lightweight, loose, light-colored clothing helps maintain body temperature, as does applying and reapplying sunscreen as directed. Scheduling workouts for early morning or evening, when temperatures are lower, reduces risk. Athletes should start activities gradually, stay vigilant about hydration, and drink water proactively, as muscle cramps can signal early heat-related issues. Monitoring one's condition and having a partner do the same adds an extra layer of safety.

These tragic losses underscore the need for awareness and proactive measures to combat heatstroke. By recognizing warning signs, prioritizing hydration and rest, and acting swiftly to cool the body, athletes, and coaches can prevent further heartbreak. The advice from

experts and advocates like Martin-Giordano serves as a sobering reminder of the dangers posed by extreme heat and the importance of preparedness to protect young lives.