

# Gfeller-Waller Concussion Awareness Act

# Youth Sports & Concussion Laws

## Sports Concussion Legislation

- Essential components
  - Education (athletes, parents, coaches).
  - Instituting a concussion policy and emergency action plan.
  - Removal from practice or play at the time of suspected concussion.
  - Medical evaluation and return to play clearance by a health care provider with training in concussion management.

# What is the Gfeller-Waller Concussion Awareness Act?

- A law that was implemented to protect the safety of student-athletes in the state of North Carolina
- Signed into law by Governor Beverly Purdue on June 16, 2011.
- Areas of focus:
  - Education
  - Emergency action and postconcussion protocol implementation
  - Clearance and return-to-play after concussion

# Matthew Gfeller and Jaquan Waller



## Football player dies after hit

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**WINSTON-SALEM** — A 15-year-old high school football player died early Sunday from a brain injury he suffered during the season-opening game, officials said.

Matt Gfeller was playing for Reynolds High School in Winston-Salem when he was injured in Friday night's game against Page High School of Greensboro.

The sophomore linebacker had been on life support at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center and underwent brain surgery late Friday.

Reynolds coach Mike Propst said Gfeller was taken off life support Saturday night and died about five hours later at 2:15 a.m. Sunday. A hospital spokeswoman said it would provide no additional information.

This was Gfeller's first year at Reynolds.

Assistant coach James Alexander said Gfeller was hit on the first play of the game nearly the same way he was hit on the play in which he was injured.

"It's the type of hit that occurs once or twice a year around the world," Paschal said.

Propst, school administrators and two pastors from local churches met with the 33 varsity players to help deal with Gfeller's death.



## High school football player's death ruled accidental

By Tim Candon, HighSchoolOT.com editor

Posted: Today at 12:17 a.m.

Updated: Today at 8:05 a.m.

**GREENVILLE, N.C.** — A state medical examiner in Greenville ruled Tuesday that the death of a Greenville Rose football player was accidental and the result of "second impact syndrome."

In a statement, Dr. M.G.F. Gilliland said Jaquan Waller died because of a "very rare condition which can occur when two relatively minor head injuries occur in a short time interval. It usually occurs in young athletes and is very rapidly fatal."

Waller, a junior running back, left the field after being tackled in Rose's game Friday against Wilmington Hoggard. He then collapsed on the sideline. Waller was taken to Pitt County Memorial Hospital, where he was placed on life support. He died Saturday morning. Waller had been hit in practice two days before the game and suffered a mild concussion.



Jaquan Waller

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# What is a concussion?

A concussion is an injury to the brain caused by a direct or indirect blow to the head. It results in your brain not working like it should. It may or may not cause you to black out or pass out. It can happen to you from a fall, a hit to the head, or a hit to the body that causes your head and your brain to move quickly back and forth.

# What are the signs and symptoms of concussion?

Thinking/Remembering	Physical	Emotional/Mood	Sleep
Difficulty thinking clearly	Headache	Irritability- everything bothers you easily	Sleeping more than usual
Feeling slowed down	Fuzzy or blurry vision	Sadness	Sleeping less than usual
Difficulty concentrating	Feeling sick to your stomach/queasy	More moody	Trouble falling asleep
Difficulty remembering new information	Vomiting/throwing up	Feeling nervous or worried	
	Dizziness		
	Balance problems		
	Sensitivity to noise or light		

# What problems can result from a concussion?

- Problems with school work
- If returned-to-play too early after a concussion, individuals may have ongoing sadness, not feel like yourself, or have trouble remembering things for a long time
- Once you have a concussion you are more likely to have another concussion



# What student-athletes should know

- You should tell your coach, your parents, and a medical professional if one is available if you think you have a concussion.
- You should not have any symptoms at rest or during/after activity when you return to play, as this is a sign your brain has not recovered from the injury.
- You need to be evaluated and cleared by a medical professional trained in concussion management before returning to your activity or sport.

# What parents should know

- If your child has any signs and symptoms of a concussion they should be evaluated by a medical professional trained in concussion management
- Your child should never return-to-play while still experiencing signs and symptoms of concussion
- If your child has a headache that gets worse over time, experience loss of coordination or abnormal body movements, have repeated nausea, vomiting, slurred speech, or you witness what you believe to be a severe head impact, you should refer them to appropriate medical personnel immediately.

# What coaches and school personnel should know

- If you suspect one of your student-athletes is exhibiting signs and symptoms consistent with a concussion, they should be removed from play immediately and not allowed to return on that same day
- All student-athletes exhibiting signs and symptoms consistent with concussion have to have written clearance from a medical professional trained in concussion management prior to returning to play

# What medical professionals should know

Concussion management training can be found at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/headsup/clinicians.html?source=govdelivery>

# A culture shift has been set in motion...and Carolina is making a difference

- Concussion education is key
- Know “red flags” for a situation turning catastrophic
- Establish an objective comprehensive evaluation & standardized RTP protocol (graduated exertional exercises)
- Think beyond the acute trauma
- Equipment safety & behavior modification
- State laws will make a difference!