

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

press@rblaw.net

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Romanucci & Blandin, Scherr Law Firm and Fulmer Sill announce civil investigation into death of college basketball player Ethan Dietz after a head injury during a game**

*20-year-old athlete was visibly in pain and grabbing his head, yet was told to keep playing – and later died of a brain bleed*

**CHICAGO (April 2, 2026)** – A college basketball player, enjoying the sport he loves, takes an elbow to the head from an opponent during a game. That can happen when athletes play hard. However, college-level athletes representing their school expect and should receive access to medical care when a potentially serious and life-threatening injury occurs. But when Ethan Dietz was injured on November 22, 2025, while playing an away game for Oklahoma’s Connors State College, his visible pain and discomfort were ignored by his coaching staff. Ethan was grabbing his head after being struck by a player’s elbow, yet Ethan was not taken out of the game until a media timeout occurred later, and he was helped off the court by two teammates. Ethan was not given appropriate immediate care - no doctor, nurse, or paramedic evaluated him. Instead, he was put back in the game and encouraged to play through his injury despite continuously grabbing his head. He did not receive a medical evaluation after the game, despite there being a hospital just minutes away from the location of the game in Texas. Instead, when the game ended at about 6:00 pm, Ethan was told to board the team bus for a 2.5-hour drive back to his college campus in Oklahoma. He was alive during this bus trip. After Ethan was left at his dorm room, he began having seizures and was finally taken to a Tulsa hospital at about 11 pm. All the while, Ethan was suffering from a brain bleed. There is medical intervention available to address the condition from which Ethan was suffering, but time is critical with a head injury of that nature. Ethan was hospitalized and later died from his injury. The coroner who examined his body reported that Ethan’s cause of death was blunt force trauma to his head, and a collection of blood between his skull and the outer brain lining on the right side of his head.

A civil investigation into the events related to Ethan’s injury and death is being conducted by a legal team of three law firms with experience in complex litigation, traumatic brain injuries and Oklahoma law.

The legal team representing Ethan’s mother, Krystal Dietz, includes Senior Partner Michael E. Holden, Partner Michael D. Cerasa and Senior Attorney Benjamin A. Berkman of national trial firm Romanucci & Blandin, Attorneys Chad W. P. Kelliher and Andrea R. Rust of Fulmer Sill, and Attorney Maxey Scherr of Scherr Law Firm.

Attorneys’ investigation will include developing a full understanding of what did and did not happen during the minutes and hours after Ethan was injured in the game. The legal team will also be examining what injury policies, processes and protocols existed – or did not exist – with the school, the athletic conference, and any other body with oversight of these athletes.

“Collegiate sports programs should have clear processes and protocols for head injuries, following years of awareness and action to establish concussion protocols at the youth sports, high school sports, collegiate and professional levels. Ethan was denied immediate medical evaluation and treatment for a significant head injury and, instead, was put back into the game to compete. With a head injury, every minute matters. Had Ethan gotten the immediate medical attention he deserved, he could be alive today,” said Senior Partner Michael E. Holden, Romanucci & Blandin.

“No student-athlete’s family should have to endure the loss of a child due to a lack of proper medical care or disregard for proper safety protocols, but that is exactly what happened. Ethan’s death was tragic, preventable, and completely unacceptable. Our legal team is committed to holding every responsible party accountable and to pursuing meaningful change for the protection of all student-athletes,” said Attorney Chad W. P. Kelliher, Fulmer Sill.

“Traumatic brain injuries are known risks in sports. Schools, coaches and programs absolutely should all have protocols for athletes when an injury is known or suspected. There should be immediate evaluation by a trained professional, some level of care available on-site, and timely transport to a medical facility if there are any concerns. It is essential, however, that not only must these protocols and policies *exist*, but they must also be *followed*. Lives depend on it. While it is impossible to prevent injuries to athletes, they should rightfully expect and receive support and medical attention should an injury occur,” said Attorney Maxey Scherr, Scherr Law Firm.

Statement from Krystal Dietz, Ethan’s mother:

“It’s impossible to describe someone like Ethan in words because words can feel empty. I remember how true this felt after writing his obituary. I have 20 years of memories and story

after story that show his character beyond simple words. Ethan was truly special, embodying kindness, joy, and authenticity. He helped others selflessly, like assisting a fallen woman or sharing his lunch with a classmate in need. His smile brightened every room, and he had a way of making everyone feel loved and heard. Ethan loved you in the deepest, most genuine way.

Ethan had a vision of becoming a Division I basketball player. He spent his summers training with both basketball and personal trainers. He fed his body like an athlete and drank only water and electrolytes. I remember checking his Life360 to make sure he was moving as he ran the bleachers and did calisthenics at his local high school's football stadium at night. He grinded year-round to better himself for the upcoming season. He had the discipline, dedication, and work ethic required to see that kind of dream through, had he only been given the time.

For me, Ethan was my life and my purpose. I wanted to provide a life for him that would give him the best chance of success in the real world. He also motivated me to be the absolute best person I could be. He was my proudest achievement, my closest friend, and the reason I strived every day to do well. He brought me love and laughter daily, and I taught him responsibility and a work ethic. We paired well together.

November 22<sup>nd</sup> was the longest night of my life. My heart pounded, my head spun, and I was numb with fear during the entire four-hour drive to Tulsa. I remember how big the hospital seemed as a nurse walked me to his room. Alone with my son, hooked to so many machines, my world crumbled and I experienced a mother's worst nightmare when hospital staff told me his condition was then unsurvivable. I remember thinking, 'This happens to other people, not me and Ethan Dietz.' People drove from all over Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas to see and pray for Ethan over the next couple of days. It was simultaneously the most horrific and beautiful experience, but what stood out the most was what Ethan meant to his people.

Every day I wake up, I remember the nightmare I am living. That is one of the worst truths I can imagine exists—that I am here, but my Ethan is not. It is a deep pain inside your body that steals your breath away and threatens never to give it back. I live with the constant feeling of wanting to crawl out of my skin, but I know I'm stuck. This is not something time heals; nor does it scab over or get easier. They say you learn to live alongside it, but today it still feels impossible. The motivation that keeps me upright is to protect another child, another mother, another athlete, another family, community, and friend from having to live the heartbreak those of us who were lucky enough to be loved by Ethan live every day."

Anyone with information about this incident is encouraged to contact Romanucci & Blandin for a confidential conversation at [312-458-1000](tel:312-458-1000) or [intakes@rblaw.net](mailto:intakes@rblaw.net).

**About Romanucci & Blandin, LLC**

*Romanucci & Blandin is a Chicago-based national trial practice committed to fighting for victims of negligence, abuse and wrongful death. For nearly 30 years, we have secured more than \$1 billion in verdicts and settlements for our clients - many for millions of dollars and others record-setting awards. Our experience ranges from mass shootings, civil rights and police misconduct to medical malpractice, sexual abuse, motor vehicle accidents or workplace injury cases involving individual or institutional negligence. Romanucci & Blandin is a valuable legal resource to individuals and groups of people who have been injured by others' wrongdoing. Referring attorneys and clients say several factors differentiate our firm: Our record of success, depth of experience, talented and dedicated legal team, tireless preparation and strategic use of communications to fight for the rights of those whose lives have been changed forever. We are different from other personal injury firms in that our work does not stop when a verdict or settlement is secured. We are often inspired by our clients' experiences and commit resources to create change in our communities. For more information about Romanucci & Blandin, please visit [www.rblaw.net](http://www.rblaw.net) or call [\(312\) 458-1000](tel:3124581000).*

**About Scherr Law Firm**

*Maxey Scherr is the founder of Scherr Law Firm, PLLC, licensed to practice in Texas, New Mexico, and Illinois. She is Board Certified in Personal Injury Trial Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization and in Trucking Law by the National Board of Trial Advocacy — a dual distinction held by only a select few attorneys nationwide. Scherr holds a Juris Doctorate from Texas Tech School of Law, a Psychology degree from the University of Massachusetts-Boston, and completed postgraduate coursework in Neuroscience at Harvard University, giving her an unparalleled ability to understand and advocate for the full human impact of catastrophic injury. Internationally recognized for her work in traumatic brain injury, she is a frequent author, speaker, and advocate for tbi victims. Scherr's unwavering commitment is that every client receives the respect and fierce representation they deserve when injuries affect their lives physically, emotionally, and financially. For more information, contact [915-881-4111](tel:9158814111), email [info@scherrlawfirm.com](mailto:info@scherrlawfirm.com), or visit [www.scherrlawfirm.com](http://www.scherrlawfirm.com).*

**About Fulmer Sill**

*At Fulmer Sill, we believe our clients' legal needs are best served when the strengths and skill sets of each Fulmer Sill team member are fully utilized in a collaborative way on every case. The entire firm — from the layout of the Fulmer Sill offices to personnel roles and responsibilities — was designed around our approach to how we handle high-stakes litigation and help clients nationwide. This includes embracing new technologies rarely used by law firms and streamlining litigation practices to eliminate unnecessary costs and delays. This has amounted in more*

*communication and better results for our referring attorneys and clients. By taking cues from the corporate world and hard lessons learned in a traditional law firm environment while taking on some of the world's most powerful corporations, Fulmer Sill has made several innovative changes to how we handle each case. Our approach brings our unparalleled attention to detail and tireless work ethic to achieve and resolve the legal needs of our clients as quickly as possible. In this way, we maintain traditional values of achieving justice for our clients but do so in a way that challenges the status quo. For more information about Fulmer Sill, please visit [www.fulmersill.com](http://www.fulmersill.com), email [admin@fulmersill.com](mailto:admin@fulmersill.com), or call [\(405\) 510-0077](tel:4055100077).*