

MY STORY OF HAYDEN

**SOCCER GOALS CAN BE DANGEROUS! THEY CAN INJURE, CRIPPLE, AND KILL.
WE KNOW FIRST HAND. OUR TEN-YEAR-OLD SON WAS KILLED BY AN UNANCHORED GOAL.**



HAYDEN WAS OUR SON AND HE WAS COLLIN AND ALANNA'S BROTHER. NOW HE'S NO LONGER HERE. How do you explain to your children that their brother is dead because a soccer goal was not properly anchored? Unfortunately, this wasn't freak accident. This happens all too often and most incidents don't get reported. There have been 32 reported deaths resulting from soccer goal tip overs, most of which occurred at a practice. It was Monday, May 7, 2007. We left our house, rushing out the door, yelling at the kids that we were going to be late if they didn't hurry up. Dinner was sitting on the stove for us to eat when we returned home. Little did we know that was the last we would see of the life with which we were so familiar. We arrived at the soccer field where Hayden was scheduled to have a scrimmage with another travel soccer team. We barely got the car in park and off he rushed to the field to play his favorite game. I'm not even sure if I said anything to him when he ran off. Maybe I said something like "Make sure you have your bag," or "Do you have your water?" That was the last time I would be able to say anything to him and hear his response "OK Mamma."

Hayden played in his scrimmage in other positions besides goalie. He scored the first goal of the game. As time went on, it was his turn to play goalie. This was nothing unusual, as he shared the position of goalie with another player. Hayden had made a couple of saves in the short time he was in goal. Then came the last play we remember - Hayden saved a goal and kicked the ball to the other end of the field. It was such a nice, high kick that all eyes were on the ball. That's when my family's world was turned upside down. There was a noise that didn't quite register, but I turned towards the noise, as did everyone else the same moment. I remember seeing our son lying face down, lifeless, on the ground.

I watched in slow motion as my husband, Greg, ran to him. I saw Collin running toward me, crying, and Alanna looking to see what was going on. I held them close, telling them it would be OK. I vaguely remember dialing 911 to tell the dispatcher my son was on the ground and that a goal had fallen on him. I don't think at that time I truly understood what was happening. I remember the looks on the faces of people around me. I knew it was serious. They tried to stop me from going to him, but I knew he needed his Mommy.

When I got to Hayden, Greg was covered in his blood, and others were frantically helping. I could hear what sounded like echoes of people saying things like "He's not breathing," and "I don't have a pulse!" Then as clear as the moment I heard Hayden cry when he was born, I heard silence. Greg, who is a registered nurse, looked up at me and said, "It's bad, Mary, it's real bad."

Greg rode with Hayden in the ambulance to the hospital. Another parent, an off-duty police officer, drove me. Other friends took Collin and Alanna home where my best friend awaited their arrival. On the ride to the hospital, I made as many calls as I could to inform friends and family of Hayden's accident. When we arrived at the hospital, I felt as though my legs had forgotten how to walk. I finally walked in the hospital with the help of Brian, the police officer. I was greeted by the mom of one of Hayden's teammates, whose face spoke a thousand sorrows. She stayed with us as I was escorted to a special room. That is where I saw Greg sitting on a couch, helpless, his arms being washed of Hayden's blood by a nurse who had been at the field with us. I heard him remind another nurse that Hayden would need some blood, as he lost a lot on the field. I knew in that moment what I was going to hear the doctor say. It was less than one hour from when the goal tipped over that the doctor entered our room and told us our son, Collin and Alanna's brother, had died.

That's the story we relive every day of our lives. Within this story is the knowledge that if the soccer goal had been properly anchored or designed not to tip over, we would still have our precious Hayden and his warm smile. We were ignorant to the danger, even though we walked right next to a goal that evening.

I have since learned how many of these accidents have occurred. "Hayden's Goal" is our mission to spread the word about anchoring goals and using non-tippable goals. Referees, coaches, managers, players and especially parents need to know what they can do to prevent another tragedy like Hayden's.

As parents, we know it's our job to protect our children everyday. Why should this be any different? If you have read this story, you now know how terribly wrong things can go when simple measures aren't followed. It is our duty as referees, coaches, managers and parents to ensure safety on the soccer field. We should empower our children with the knowledge of soccer goal safety. Let them know they have the right to speak up and tell a coach if they feel a goal is not properly secured. Let the coaches know to heed their warning. These are their precious lives we are talking about, and no game, no practice, is worth risking their safety.

A memorial fund has been established in the name **HAYDEN BARNES ELLIAS** who was killed during a soccer scrimmage on May 7th. Those interested in making a donation should make checks payable to the:

**Hayden Barnes Ellias Memorial Fund
c/o Michelle Hutton
124 Slippery Elm Dr.
Stephens City, VA 22655**

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO REMEMBER:

- No goal that has not been properly secured should be used.
For more info on anchor types go to: www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/soccer.pdf.
- It can take as little as 22 pounds of pressure to tip over a 400-pound goal.
- Inspect goals for sharp corners, loose hardware, and structural integrity.
- Forbid any horseplay around goals, especially climbing on or hanging from goals.
- Remove nets when goals are not in use.
- Only an informed adult should move portable goals. At no time should any child be responsible for moving a goal.
- Portable goals should be secured in a safe place when not in use and should be inaccessible to children
- "Push, don't pull." Stand on the outside of a goal and "push" forward to check for stability of the goal. Do not stand in front of the goal and "pull". If the goal is not stable it will fall directly on you!!
- **CHECK EVERY GOAL, EVERY TIME!** Just because it was secure yesterday, doesn't guarantee it's secure today!