

Stillwater sophomore goes into cardiac arrest during football practice; family raises money for CPR training

Keegan Hawke was in a medically induced coma for 72 hours.

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Stillwater Ponies sophomore football coach Matt Hemenway rushed to the side of player Keegan Hawke after hearing him say, "Coach, coach coach," before falling to the ground.

"He just kind of crumpled in front of me and scared the heck out of all of us," Hemenway said.

Keegan Hawke, a sophomore at Stillwater High School, suffered a sudden cardiac arrest during football practice Sept. 24, 2024, and was saved by coaches, teammates and first responders. (Courtesy of GoFundMe)

Hawke joined the football team in August, after last playing the sport in eighth grade. Coaches said Hawke had a lot to learn, but is a hard worker.

That day, Sept. 24, Hawke suffered a sudden cardiac arrest during a noncontact drill led by Hemenway. It later was determined to be linked to Torsades de Pointes, a type of heart rhythm disorder, according to a [Caringbridge](#) post by Hawke's father.

"He was really making some progress towards becoming a very good football player," head sophomore coach Paul Wieland said. "It was fun to watch him grow."

Hemenway said when he and other coaches responded to Hawke, he was unresponsive.

"Everything was kind of a blur after that," Hemenway said.

Coaches asked a student to call the school's two certified athletic trainers, who arrived in a matter of minutes, Hemenway and Wieland said. Trainers then put

an automated external defibrillator (AED) on Hawke, which did not spark right away.

After the trainers administering CPR, they tried the AED again and it did its job, restarting Hawke's heart, according to Hemenway.

"By the time EMTs and everybody got there, Keegan was breathing on his own and had a pulse when he left," Wieland said.

Recovering in hospital

Hawke was first taken to Regions Hospital then to Gillette Children's, where he was in a medically induced coma for 72 hours, according to coaches.

Hawke's father said on Caringbridge that without the fast response of coaches, trainers, teammates and medical personnel, Hawke would not be alive.

"Our trainers did a phenomenal job, they knew exactly what they were doing to get Keegan's heart started again," Hemenway said.

After hearing Hawke had regained consciousness, Hemenway said he texted him, "We love you, we're so happy you're with us, let us know if there's anything we can do for you," to which Hawke responded, "Thanks Coach."

Wieland said he's spoken to Hawke's parents and that the coaches want to visit him when they're able.

"We hope to see him soon," Wieland said. "Next week we have our team dinner, and hopefully he'll be released and get to join us for the team dinner and on the sidelines for our final game."

The coaches said players took a knee on the field during the incident and some prayed together.

Raising money for CPR training

According to a [GoFundMe](#) page, Hawke and his family are trying to raise money both to support Hawke's medical expenses and to provide training to coaches and staff in the St. Croix River Valley.

"I'm glad for it, I think that's a good use of the resources that the Hawkes are raising," Wieland said.

Wieland and Hemenway said they are both CPR certified, but as time has passed, neither is up-to-date on current training. Hemenway said with more regular CPR training, coaches likely would have been even faster to react than they were.

"I can't even imagine if this would have happened 15, 20 years ago. We would have had no access to an AED or no idea really what to do with them," Hemenway said.

Wieland said that he's thankful the right people were positioned at the time of the incident.

"This is a story where systems worked," Wieland said. "It's really kind of a blessing that whatever happened with Keegan's heart happened at football practice with alert adults and a training staff."

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