

Silent Killer Of Young Athletes

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Sudden deaths of high school athletes have some parents now demanding mandatory medical tests at school.

They believe this could save lives, because some student athletes don't know they have a heart problem until it's too late, **CBS News Correspondent Mika Brzezinski** reports.

Chris and Sandy Boslet are two of those parents, and they remember the phone call like it was yesterday.

Their son Ryan had collapsed at a football workout, and when they arrived they found him lying flat on the gym floor as his coaches frantically tried to revive him.

"And he said, 'Miss Boslet, Ryan's not breathing.' And we knew something was really wrong then," Sandy Boslet recalled.

Ryan was pronounced dead at the hospital an hour later, and immediately the Boslets were asking how their 6'4", 270-pound 17-year-old could die so suddenly.

There were no warning signs, Sandy Boslet told **Brzezinski**.

An autopsy showed Ryan had a silent heart condition known as hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, or HCM. By one estimate, as many as 300 people will die from HCM each year — and the vast majority will be athletes under 18.

"If there's something that will detect it, then I think we should utilize those machines that will save our kids lives," Sandy Boslet said.

"Do you think it would have saved his life," **Brzezinski** asked.

"Absolutely. Without a doubt," the Boslets answered.

The Boslets believe a simple EKG would have done it. That's why they want all schools to require EKGs before clearing any kid to play sports. Cardiologist Dr. Robert Myerburg agrees. He cites a recent study in Italy, where EKGs for young athletes are mandatory.

"Among their athletes, hypertrophic cardiomyopathy is almost nonexistent as a cause of sudden death in athletes. In the United States, it's the most common cause," Dr. Myerburg said.

But while more than 20 million teenagers take part in athletics in the U.S., not even the American Heart Association advocates automatically doing EKGs. Pediatric cardiologist

Robert Campbell says it's better to track family history and look for classic warning signs like shortness of breath or fainting before requiring an expensive test.

"No matter how many EKGs we do, that answer alone is not going to be a simple guarantee that we've prevented sudden death," Dr. Campbell said. "I think it comes down to resources and reality."

But the only reality to the Boslets is the death of their son.

"You keep thinking that this isn't real. It's a nightmare. You're going to wake up and this never happened," Chris Boslet told **Brzezinski**.

It did happen, and the Boslets will always believe a simple test could have made Ryan a poster boy for the sport he loved, not the silent disease that killed him.