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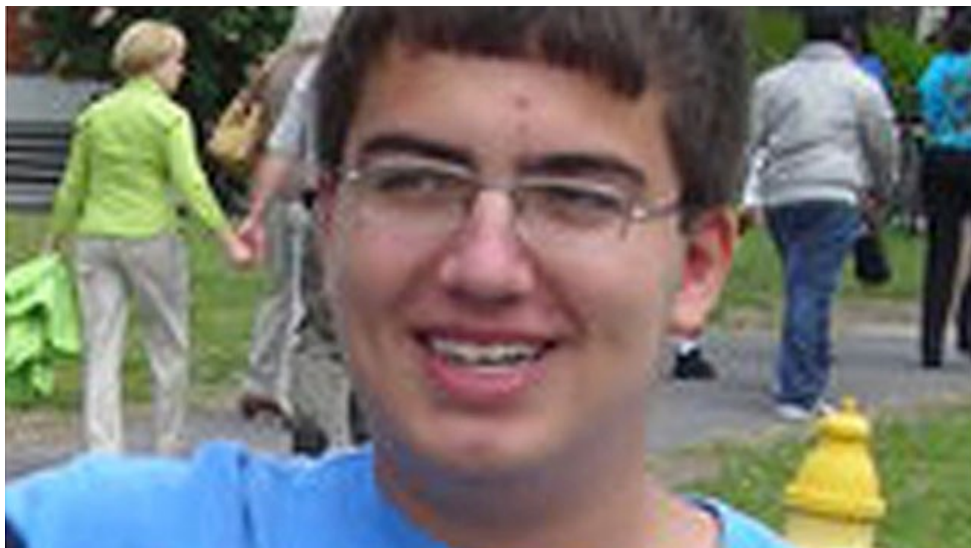
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Autopsy: New York Football Player Ridge Barden Dies of On-field Brain Injury



Ridge Barden is shown in this an undated photo provided by the Barden family. (Barden Family/AP Photo)

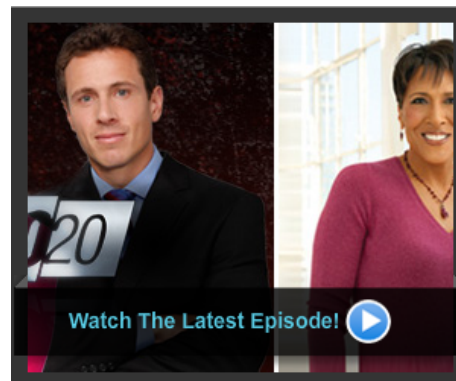
By KATTI GRAY
Oct. 16, 2011

A [teen athlete](#) who collapsed at a football game in Phoenix, N.Y., died of bleeding in the brain unleashed by forceful bodily contact on the field, according to an autopsy released today.

[Ridge Barden, 16](#), toppled onto the field Friday during the third quarter of the game between his Phoenix High School and Homer High School, reported ABC's Syracuse, N.Y., affiliate, WSYR-TV, which has read the autopsy report. It is not been officially released.

"It's still shocking. He was with us and now he's gone," his mother, [Jacqueline Barden](#), told WSYR-TV.

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Her 230-pound, sports-loving son's accidental death, nonetheless, amplifies the acknowledged challenges of safeguarding the health of student athletes nationwide.



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Head injuries have attracted a singular attention, with New York State lawmakers, for example, this year approving a Concussion Management Awareness Act. For every school district, it mandates concussion management teams comprised of sports staff, health and other professionals.

The Florida High School Athletics Association, as another example, has ordered new rules aimed at keeping athletes suspected of having endured a concussion from returning to play without a doctor's formal clearance.

Members of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, by law, must implement policies to minimize brain injuries, including concussion awareness training.

said her child, who had been playing sports since Little League, had no pre-existing medical problems.

Stunned by his collapse, the lineman's teammates encircled him as soon after he fell onto the field, following what The Associated Press reported as an especially hard hit by one of his team's opponents.

Trainers and coaches rushed over to find him talking, able to roll over on his back by himself and sit up, said Phoenix School District Superintendent Judy Belfield. Still, he complained of a severe headache and buckled again when he tried to stand, she said.

An outpouring of grief, condolences and support for his family has spread online. "R.I.P. Ridge Barden," reads a Facebook page.

His grieving mother told WSYR-TV she hopes no one feels he is fault in this tragedy. Ridge, she said, "would feel the same way."

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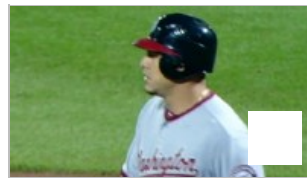
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