

Heart condition may have contributed to death of Graham

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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An autopsy revealed a possible heart condition that may have contributed to the death of 13-year-old Toney Graham of Granite City during an off-season football training session at Granite City High School Wednesday evening.



Graham, who was going to be an incoming freshman at GCHS in August, collapsed after stretching prior to a weight-training session at the high school's Memorial Gym annex, according to a press release from Madison County Coroner Steve Nonn's office. He was taken to Gateway Regional Medical Center in Granite City, where he was pronounced dead at 6:09 p.m.

Practice had begun at 4 p.m. with fittings for uniforms for the coming season, then proceeded to a pre-training stretching session, the release said. “(Graham) suddenly collapsed onto the floor,” said the release. “Coaching staff rendered aid to Graham while awaiting the arrival of Granite City Fire Department EMS. There was no report of complaints or illness and (Graham) was reportedly laughing and joking with his teammates before his collapse.”

The gym area where Graham collapsed is air-conditioned; Warrior coaches who were present at the session immediately came to Graham's aid until EMTs arrived.

An autopsy that was performed on Graham indicated no evidence of foul play or previous trauma, but did show signs of what the release called “cardiac disease”. A cause of death, however, was not indicated pending the results of further testing; he had no previous history of medical problems at the time of death.

“It's a tough situation,” said Granite City School Superintendent Jim Greenwald. “We had a meeting at the high school with our football team members and parents to talk about what happened; we had about 70 in attendance. In addition, we're providing grief counselors to the players so they can talk about what happened.”

Warrior team members were stunned by the incident. “We're in total disbelief about what happened,” Greenwald said.

Funeral arrangements were pending at the time of writing.