School District Settles with Former Football Player for $2 Million

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In the largest settlement in Hillsborough County Florida School Board ("Board") history, the Board agreed to pay $2 million dollars to settle a suit brought after one of its high school football players suffered a brain injury during practice.

The incident allegedly took place right before practice while the player was not wearing his helmet. The player jumped for a pass and struck his head on a machine the school used to paint the lines on the field. Allegedly, after being checked out by the coaching staff, the player was allowed to drive himself home. Once home, his parents noticed something was wrong and took him to the hospital. Tests showed he had suffered a fractured skull.

The Board went beyond merely settling the case; it took additional steps to protect its students from this type of occurrence in the future. Pursuant to Florida law, the Board could only pay the player up to $300,000. However, the Board is supporting the player's separate claim bill with the State Legislature, asking it to authorize payment of the additional $1.7 million. Further, the Board agreed to add $1 million in additional insurance coverage for student athletes. Finally, as part of the settlement, the Board will update its policies to address head injuries and will put in place specific procedures to ensure the new policies are followed.

What You Need To Know

Advances in science have brought the discussion about head injuries in sports to national attention. Schools should have policies and procedures in place to ensure their employees react properly in case they are faced with this type of unfortunate situation. The attorneys at Frost Brown Todd are happy to assist you in reviewing your policies and procedures.

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