

Braun17

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High-school basketball star killed and two others injured in a three-vehicle collision on
Commonwealth Avenue

A three-vehicle collision at the intersection of Mexico Gravel Road and Commonwealth Avenue yesterday afternoon left a high-school basketball star dead and two others injured, Newton Police Chief Nunzi Cimalore said at a press conference yesterday.

Kenneth Braun Jr., a 16-year-old Newton High School junior, was killed as a result of blunt force trauma to the head and chest, said Cimalore. He was a captain of the high school boys' basketball team, Cimalore said, and he was pronounced dead at Newton General Hospital shortly after the crash.

Ruth Davis, a 24-year-old nurse at Newton General Hospital, and Brad Cottle, another 16-year-old junior at Newton High School, were also transported to Newton General Hospital as a result of the crash, Cimalore said. Brad Cottle suffered a broken leg, and Ruth Davis sustained a collapsed lung, Cimalore said. He said they were in stable condition as of yesterday afternoon.

Braun, with Cottle as his passenger, drove west on Mexico Gravel Road before he drove through a stop sign and passed a car stopped at the intersection of Mexico Gravel Road and Commonwealth Avenue, Cimalore said. Michael Fuhrman, 26, drove a school bus north on Commonwealth Avenue and struck Braun's car on the driver's side, said Cimalore.

This launched Braun's vehicle in front of Ruth Davis's minivan in the opposite lane, which traveled south on Commonwealth Avenue, said Cimalore. The minivan then careened into a ditch along the west side of Commonwealth Avenue, Cimalore said.

Braun went home early yesterday with Cottle at 2 p.m. before their last-period study hall, said Cimalore. Braun's home, 2117 Mexico Gravel Road, is about a mile from the school and just two houses down from the intersection of the crash, Cimalore said.

They left Braun's home late for basketball practice in Braun's Honda CR-V at approximately 3:01 p.m., said Cimalore, and the crash occurred shortly thereafter. Practice normally begins sharply at 3 p.m, Cimalore said.

Braun was on his junior license at the time, which made it illegal to have any passengers in the vehicle without a parent or guardian present, said Cimalore.

Police identified Braun's stop sign violation as the primary cause of the crash, Cimalore said. The driver of the vehicle that Braun passed at the intersection almost immediately called 9-1-1 after the incident, and Michael Fuhrman called just minutes after that, Cimalore said.

Fuhrman had just finished his route to drop off students from Angier Elementary School, said Cimalore, and no children were in the bus at the time of the crash.

Kenneth Braun Sr., Braun Jr.'s father and head coach of the basketball team at Newton High, made it his policy to bench players for the first quarter of the next game if they arrived late to practice, Cimalore said.

The next game for the team was the regional championship tonight against Newton's rival Waltham High School, said Cimalore, but the game was postponed.

Braun Jr. helped the team achieve its current undefeated record this season and its championship win last year, Cimalore said. Several Ivy League and Division I schools looked at Braun Jr. for recruitment, although he had his eyes set on Brown University, said Cimalore.

Within five minutes of the first report, the Newton Fire Department, several ambulances, and two Newton Police units arrived, said Cimalore. Firefighters employed the jaws of life to open Braun Jr.'s vehicle and pull him out, Cimalore said. They then brought him to the on-site paramedics, said Cimalore.

"The smell of burning rubber," tire tracks, broken glass, and crushed vehicles made the scene "a terrible thing to see," Cimalore said.

After several attempts to revive him both on the scene and after transport to the hospital, Braun Jr. was officially pronounced dead at 3:35 p.m. yesterday, said Cimalore. His family was notified by police, and they were "devastated," Cimalore said.

Braun Jr. and Brad Cottle ran Books and Hoops as president and vice president respectively, said Cimalore. The organization brings Newton High School's girls' and boys' basketball teams together to tutor children from underprivileged homes and teach them the game of basketball on Saturday mornings, said Cimalore.

The two also actively participated in student government with Braun Jr. as vice president of Newton High School's junior class and Cottle as the class treasurer, said Cimalore.

Newton High School held an assembly with grief counselors available during the first period of class this morning to address the tragedy, Cimalore said. He added that memorial services have not been scheduled at this time.