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The Case of State of South Carolina v. Dorian Delaney

The court was asked to consider a very complicated and tragic case in State of South Carolina v. Dorian Delaney. According to the prosecution, track coach Dorian Delaney illegally killed Kylin Abbott on August 8, 2024, by denying him fluids and causing him to participate in risky track sessions. Delaney was accused of two serious crimes under South Carolina law: Unlawful Conduct Toward a Child and Involuntary Manslaughter. Both the defense and the prosecution used testimony and evidence throughout the trial to establish the defendant's guilt or innocence. Despite having a criminal legal foundation, the case developed into a complex and intensely emotional tale that affected everyone involved.

The main thrust of the prosecution's case was that on the morning of August 8, 2024, Delaney, in his capacity as a track team coach, had treated Kylin Abbott carelessly during an especially taxing track practice. Given Kylin's youth and the physically demanding nature of the sport, the prosecution argues that Delaney had an obligation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of his players. They said that the young boy's untimely death was directly caused by Delaney's failure to make sure Kylin drank enough water and to take the right precautions during the exercise.

The prosecution presented testimony from several witnesses, including Kylin's teammates, who described how Kylin had been visibly struggling during the practice. One teammate recalled seeing Kylin panting heavily and asking for water, but being told by Delaney to "push through" the fatigue. Another teammate testified that the practice, which took place on a

particularly hot and humid day, had been more intense than usual, with Delaney pushing the athletes to run long sprints without regular breaks or water breaks.

The most damning piece of evidence came from the medical examiner, who testified that Kylin's cause of death was acute dehydration, leading to a heat stroke. The examiner explained that dehydration, especially when combined with intense physical exertion in extreme weather conditions, could cause a cascade of health issues, ultimately leading to organ failure and death. The prosecution argued that Delaney's failure to properly hydrate the athletes and take precautions against heat exhaustion demonstrated a reckless disregard for Kylin's life and well-being.

Further testimony came from Kylin's parents, who described their son as a promising young athlete who loved track and field. His mother spoke emotionally about how they trusted Delaney to protect their child while he was under his supervision. She emphasized that Kylin had always been a healthy, active child, and his sudden death was both shocking and heart-wrenching. The prosecution used this emotional testimony to highlight the gravity of Delaney's alleged failure as a coach.

In response to the charges, Delaney's defense team mounted an aggressive challenge to the prosecution's version of events. The defense's strategy was twofold: to argue that Kylin's death was not the result of Delaney's actions, and to cast doubt on whether Delaney's conduct could be deemed reckless under the law.

Delaney himself took the stand in his own defense, offering a tearful and heartfelt account of the events of August 8. He explained that as a coach, he had always prioritized the safety of his athletes, and he adamantly denied any wrongdoing. Delaney testified that Kylin had been a strong and resilient athlete, capable of handling tough practices, and that he had regularly encouraged all the athletes to stay hydrated. According to Delaney, the day of the practice had

been hot, but not excessively so, and he did not believe the conditions were extreme enough to cause heat-related illness.

The defense also argued that there were several factors that contributed to Kylin's death beyond the actions of Delaney. They called expert witnesses to testify that dehydration can occur even in athletes who are otherwise well-prepared and properly supervised. The defense suggested that Kylin may have had a pre-existing medical condition that made him more susceptible to heat stroke, a factor beyond Delaney's control. They also pointed out that Kylin's teammates did not appear to be similarly affected by the heat or lack of water during the practice, suggesting that Kylin's death was an unfortunate and unpredictable outcome, rather than the result of deliberate negligence.

Additionally, Delaney's defense argued that the charge of Unlawful Conduct Toward a Child was unfounded, as Kylin had voluntarily participated in the practice and had not been placed at an unreasonable risk of harm by Delaney. They contended that, although the practice may have been intense, it was not inherently dangerous, and that Delaney had taken steps to ensure the athletes' safety by providing water at designated breaks and monitoring their overall well-being.

After several weeks of testimony, cross-examination, and deliberation, the jury reached a verdict. The case, filled with deeply emotional moments and conflicting expert opinions, was not easy for the jurors to navigate. They had to weigh the tragic loss of a promising young life against the intent and actions of the defendant.

Ultimately, the jury found Dorian Delaney guilty of Unlawful Conduct Toward a Child but acquitted him of the more serious charge of Involuntary Manslaughter. The jury concluded that while Delaney's actions were negligent and placed Kylin Abbott at an unreasonable risk of

harm, there was not enough evidence to prove that Delaney's conduct directly caused the boy's death in the manner required to meet the legal threshold for manslaughter.

The verdict was met with mixed emotions. Kylin's family, though devastated by the loss of their son, expressed a sense of closure with the conviction on the Unlawful Conduct Toward a Child charge, believing that justice had been served in some way, even if it wasn't the outcome they had hoped for. Delaney, on the other hand, faced a range of consequences—while not convicted of the most serious charge, he was still held accountable for his failure to ensure Kylin's safety during the practice.

The case ultimately left a lasting impression on the community. It sparked broader conversations about the responsibilities of coaches, the safety of young athletes, and the balance between pushing students to perform and ensuring their well-being. The trial also highlighted the complexities of criminal law, where emotional testimonies, expert opinions, and the nuances of duty of care intersect in ways that can be difficult to navigate.

In the end, the trial of State of South Carolina v. Dorian Delaney was a tragedy for all involved—Kylin Abbott, his family, Dorian Delaney, and the community. It served as a reminder of the profound impact of seemingly small actions and decisions, and the tragic consequences they can have on the lives of others.