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Riddell Helmet Design Contributed To Brain Injury, Suit Says

By **Elaine Briseño**

Law360 (September 9, 2024, 5:53 PM EDT) -- The parents of a high school football player who suffered a life-altering injury that left him reliant on a wheelchair have filed a federal product liability suit in Texas against Riddell Inc., the maker of the allegedly defective helmet he was wearing when he was hurt.

Cooper Daniel Reid was 16 years old on Sept. 9, 2022, when he was hit near the end of his homecoming game, resulting in a traumatic brain injury that left him no longer able to hear, speak or walk, according to the lawsuit. His parents, Terry Glynn and Susanne Hamilton Reid, filed the lawsuit on behalf of their son, arguing that failures in the helmet's design created additional injury risks.

The teen was wearing a Riddell SpeedFlex helmet, which, the parents allege in their lawsuit, the company knew had associated risks that were not "readily recognizable to the ordinary user." The company touted the helmet's extensive on-field impact testing, but it failed to protect their son because the materials used to construct it were defective, according to the lawsuit.

"As designed, manufactured, marketed, sold, and distributed, the helmet was unreasonably dangerous and defective because it failed to have a structure and design that would effectively deflect and deform to distribute, diminish and absorb the foreseeable forces of impact and reduce the peak accelerations of impact energy to a player's head," the lawsuit said.

Defective design elements include the quick-release fastener between the helmet shell and face mask, the shell's dual lines or ridges and the liner meant to absorb energy inside the equipment.

The lawsuit also accused Riddell and its affiliated companies, Riddell Sports Group Inc., All American Sports Corp. and BRG Sports Inc., of negligence. The parents are seeking monetary damages in an unspecified amount for what they say is their son's loss of earning capacity and permanent injuries that will require nursing, psychological, hospital and parental care and treatment for the rest of his life.

Riddell declined to comment and an attorney for the plaintiffs did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The plaintiffs are represented by Russell Post and Nicholas Bruno of Beck Redden LLP, Jennifer Ainsworth of Wilson Robertson & Vandeventer PC, Richard Warren Mithoff and Janie Jordan of Mithoff Law, and Otis Carroll Jr. of Carroll Maloney Henry & Nelson PLLC.

Counsel information for the defendants was not immediately available.

The case is Reid et al. v. Riddell Inc. et al., case number 2:24-cv-00731, in the U.S. District Court Eastern District of Texas Marshall Division.

--Editing by Kelly Duncan.

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