

# Judge orders release of Rohrbough autopsy

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**Jan. 31, 2001** - A judge on Tuesday ordered the release of the full autopsy report on Columbine High School victim Daniel Rohrbough and the autopsy summaries of other victims, including Dylan Klebold, one of the two shooters.

The Rohrbough autopsy report and "the initial portions of the other reports containing ...- opinions as to cause of death" should be released to the public, District Judge Brooke Jackson ruled in a 10-page order. Families of Columbine victims have fought to keep the autopsies sealed, testifying that disclosure would bring great harm and grief to them, the local community and the public.

"We are disappointed that anything is being released, because we didn't want anything released," said attorney Jim Rouse, who represents several families, including Rohrbough's. "We are grateful that a large portion of the materials are remaining sealed."

Rohrbough's autopsy is being released in its entirety because of the federal lawsuit his family has filed against the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office. They claim Daniel was shot and killed by a police officer rather than by Eric Harris or Klebold.

"There is public interest in knowing whether Daniel was killed by 'friendly fire,' as contended by the Rohrboughs," Jackson wrote.

Daniel Rohrbough's father, Brian, who has sued the Sheriff's Office, said he has been prepared for the release of the autopsy report.

"I think it is important for people to understand he was running from the gunmen who were on the hill behind him, and he was shot and killed from the front," he said.

"The fatal bullet could not have come from Klebold and Harris. It had to come from law enforcement at the bottom of the hill."

Autopsies of victim Isaiah Shoels and Harris have already been released as public documents without objection from their families.

Autopsy reports of the other victims in the April 20, 1999, massacre have been available to their parents and to the wife of slain teacher Dave Sanders.

The Denver Post went to court seeking the release of the remaining autopsies.

"Generally, we are pleased that Judge Jackson did release information about all of the victims that permits the public to assess how government officials performed their duties," said attorney Steven D. Zansberg, who represents The Post. "But we are troubled by some of the limitation in his ruling."

The Jefferson County coroner's office did not release the summaries or Rohrbough's complete autopsy Tuesday. Coroner Nancy Bodelson said she would first consult with the county attorney's office.

Rouse said it will be up to his clients "whether they want to sit tight and let the order stand or whether they want to appeal." In his order, Jackson wrote that the public "would oppose publication were they to understand that (it) might cause further grief and trauma to those closest to the case." Still, Jackson ruled that the "executive summary" portion of the autopsies be released because it "would not cause substantial injury to the public interest."

"It is no secret that these individuals died from gunshot wounds." In the order, Jackson wrote that the Klebolds also are victims of the tragedy.

"They, too, lost their son. They, too, have feelings of hurt and grief, doubtless compounded by the horror of knowing that their son was a perpetrator of these acts. For the present purpose, the court finds no compelling reason to set (them) apart from the other victim families."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.