

Rohrbough was shot from below

By Kieran Nicholson
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Feb. 1, 2001 - The autopsy report on Columbine shooting victim Daniel Rohrbough was released Wednesday after his family opted against appealing a judge's ruling that made the document public.

The 10-page report is expected to be used as evidence in a federal lawsuit filed by Rohrbough's family. His parents allege that the 15-year-old student was shot by police and not gunmen Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris. Rohrbough was shot three times - in the chest, abdomen and left leg - with a 9mm gun, the report says.

Jim Rouse, the lawyer representing the Rohrbough family and the families of five other victims, said he believes the trajectory of the bullets and how they entered the body prove that Rohrbough was killed by "friendly fire."

"Everybody admits that the gunman was on the top of the hill shooting down the hill," said Rouse. "There were two witnesses who saw him (Daniel) running down the hill" with his back to the gunman on the hill. But "the bullet wounds are from the front, and the trajectory of the fatal bullet is up."

Rouse said whoever fired the fatal shot was downhill of Rohrbough and in front of him. The report shows that two of the bullets "traveled upward" through his body.

Sgt. Mike Julian of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office said, "The investigation shows there is no merit to the questions that deputies were involved in shooting Daniel."

He declined to comment further and referred questions to the Jefferson County attorney's office. The county attorney's office did not return calls Wednesday afternoon.

Two of the four guns used by Klebold and Harris in the April 20, 1999, rampage were 9mm weapons. The other two were 12-gauge shotguns.

Many police officers use 9mm handguns, and some of the SWAT officers who responded carried 9mm weapons.

Rouse said the Sheriff's Office report claims that either Harris or Klebold stood over Rohrbough, who was on the ground, and fired a close range shot at the teen.

"If that were the case, there should be some evidence of the bullet on the sidewalk. No evidence of the bullet was recovered. That was what the family was told," Rouse said.

Rouse complained that he's been denied access to the clothing Daniel wore the day of the shooting, which has barred his forensics team from running tests that might determine the range from which the bullets were fired.

"Clothing is being withheld by the sheriff's department even though we are under the impression that forensic tests on the clothing would be a good indicator of what happened," Rouse said.

The Rohrbough autopsy was released a day after Jefferson District Judge Brooke Jackson ordered it disclosed to the public. He also ordered that summaries of other autopsy reports be released.

The Denver Post has sought their disclosure over objections from the families and the county.

The summaries - including one on Klebold - have not yet been released, and the families may appeal Jackson's ruling.

The full autopsy reports for Harris and victim Isaiah Shoels were released in 1999.

In Tuesday's ruling, Jackson disclosed that Klebold had no drugs or alcohol in his system at the time of the massacre. Klebold's attorney, Gary Lozow, said he doesn't expect the family to appeal Jackson's ruling.

"My clients think the court's decision was appropriate and compassionate," said Lozow.