

Parents about the death of Sammy (23): "Our son should have gotten help, not police bullets"

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Mother Justine and father Kai about the death of their son Sammy. (Photo: Esther Maas)

Police bullets have ended the life of 23-year-old German influencer Sammy Baker last summer in Amsterdam. For the first time since his death, his parents are telling their story. "I was standing 250 meters away when the bullets were fired at my child. Sammy was always helping others, but no one helped him."

Sammy used to love his own birthdays. "He never really drank. He was always the driver. But his birthdays were sacred, they had to be special every year," says mother Justine, 48.

When Sammy turned 21, he went to Las Vegas with friends for his birthday. This summer, he turned 23 and chose Amsterdam. "I wish he'd never gone," Justine says in a quiet voice. Tears fill her large eyes. Sammy was shot by police officers on Aug. 13, completely confused, in a yard in Slotervaart. Police bullets ended his life. It was his last birthday.



In deep sorrow

More than three months later, Sammy's parents are telling their story for the first time. They traveled from the German city of Wetzlar, a medieval town with a population of more than 50,000 in Hesse, to the place where their son spent the last hours of his life. "I loved Amsterdam so much. Its inhabitants and its beauty. But now everything is gray. The people are dark, the places black," describes mother Justine.

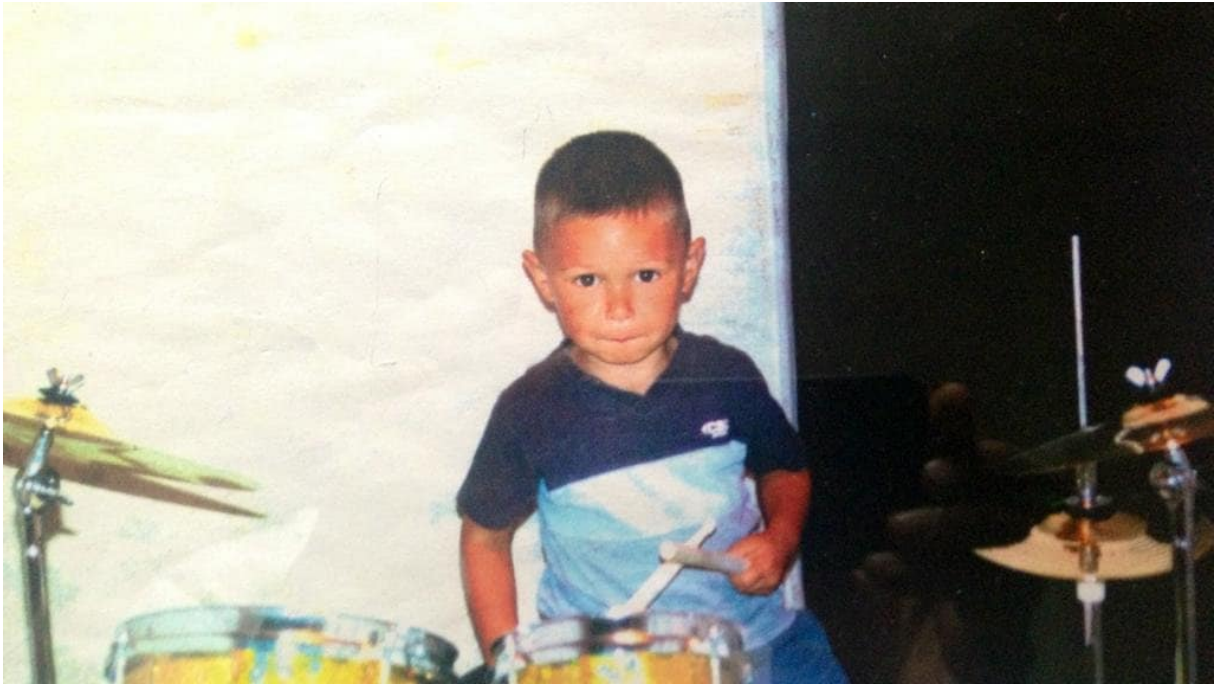
How is she doing now? Perhaps the most difficult question. "My only child was taken away from me. We are in grief and full of sorrow," says mother Justine. "And then there's anger."

Rijksrecherche investigation

Sammy's parents want to tell who their son was. How big the loss is, not only for them, but also for his friends and many fans. And they want to tell their story to save other parents from having to go through "this hell."

The investigation by the Rijksrecherche which usually conducts investigations into police shootings, has been completed, the prosecutor's office in Amsterdam announced. The prosecutor's office will now decide whether or not to prosecute the officers. That decision is expected within a few weeks, most likely.

Since the case is still under investigation, Sammy's parents don't want to say much about the investigation and their possible next steps. But they are fighting, with attorney Richard Korver standing by their side.



Sammy loved to play music.

Questions

In the blink of an eye, Sammy's parents end up in a film that is difficult to describe. A film that raises many questions, but whose end is certain: Sammy is shot.

Father Kai takes us back to the week in August of that year. "One day before Samuel left for Amsterdam, I saw him. With my maternal grandmother and so with his great-grandmother, who is 101 years old. Sammy was happy and looking forward to his birthday. That night he went to a Thai boxing event."

Totally wrong

The next day he drives to Amsterdam for his birthday. Something happened to Sammy there that made him go completely crazy, mother Justine continues. "He was traveling with two friends and wanted to meet two other friends in Amsterdam. Since we're in touch often, I called him the day he arrived, Monday, to see if things were going well in Amsterdam."

"No," she gets back. Strange. Not at all like Sammy.

Police is called

There is contact back and forth. But it's all vague and distant. Even on Tuesday, the day of his birthday. "It seemed like he was looking for more and more distance. He sort of didn't want contact. He was running away from his friends, too."

The worries increase when Sammy doesn't answer his phone. "At some point, I called the Amsterdam police to alert them. I reported him missing, said he was confused and asked them to look for him."



Mother Justine: "My only child was taken away from me" / Esther Maas

Gunshots heard

Mother Justine is going crazy in despair in Germany and decides to get in the car to drive to Amsterdam. The hours that follow are the script for the worst movie of all. "At some point Sammy called me again. On a strange woman's phone. He sounded confused. I asked him where he was. By some miracle, he spelled out a street name for me."

Full of panic and fear, Justine moves through the city. She manages to get to him. At the car, a confusing meeting happens. Sammy is completely confused and runs away again. A little further down the street, in a courtyard garden, he makes a turn. His mother can't manage to keep him with her. She asks a policeman who happens to be nearby to intervene, and he talks to Sammy. But he runs away.

Swinging a knife

Justine is a few blocks away when Sammy is waving a knife in the yard. According to police, he is threatening to harm himself, is unresponsive and in a confused state. A chaotic situation develops. Police shoot him several times. In self-defense, police later testify.

"I was 250 meters away. I heard the bullets that ended my son's life." She has not been able to view the footage, which is online, until today.



A female police officer at the scene where Baker was shot.

It hurts to realize this crucial moment. "We have so many questions. Why was he so different than usual? We have no idea," says father Kai. Drug use would explain extreme behavioral changes.

But the fact that he was shot and police officers couldn't help him is incomprehensible to the parents. "My child should have gotten help, not bullets," says mother Justine. There were so many other options. "They should have de-escalated, not escalated." The Rijksrecherche investigation must answer that.

Wonderful stories

The silence is long. The tears dry. The telling of beautiful stories and memories of Sammy offers comfort. "Sammy was a wonderfully happy boy. Even as a little boy. He always woke me up by gently pulling my hair or pulling the sheets away."

"He loved basketball and could dribble so well even as a little boy." Justine adds, " Remember how he cried out loud one day during basketball practice? He hardly cried when he was a little kid, but now he was really crying. There was a reason for it. He had gotten the ball on his hand and the finger was broken."

Music talent

Besides sports, there was also a talent for music. Father Kai begins to smile. His son got the musical talent from him. "We had a keyboard and a drum set at home. He loved to play on them. He loved to jam. And could do it, too. Fantastic."

A memory of South Africa comes to mind. "We were walking across a market and Sammy saw a drum. He was about eight years old. He grabbed the instrument and started jamming. The market vendor couldn't believe what happened to him. What an adorable kid he was."



Sammy as little boy /own image

Influencer

During puberty, Sammy became more interested in bodybuilding. "Sammy was always small in stature and had a beautiful body. His interest in bodybuilding and nutrition grew. He wanted to become more muscular. And started training for it."

He posted his pictures on Instagram. He developed into a well-known bodybuilder. "He had over 170,000 followers. In Germany, but also in other countries. Sammy gave workshops and nutritional advice. He was more than just a popular Instagram guy. He helped people grow and built a business."



During his adolescence, his interest in bodybuilding developed.

After his death, his parents realized how much their son meant to others. "We got so many messages from fans. We were overwhelmed with beautiful stories about what Sammy meant to them. For example, a handicapped man from Greece told us how much support he got from Sammy. We had no idea. He was always helping people. Was there for people."

That there was no help for Sammy at the right time hurts. "We never heard from the Amsterdam police again. No apology, no phone call. Nothing."

Amsterdam police response

According to the police, officials expressed their condolences on the same day of Sammy's death. "During the incident, contact was made with Sammy Baker's mother. She was in Amsterdam and was accompanied and hosted by colleagues of the Amsterdam police. Of course, at that time, sympathy was expressed."

However, there was never any contact after that, the police confirmed.

"After the incident, the investigation was launched by Rijksrecherche (National Criminal Investigation Department), which is standard in incidents

where police used force and those involved were seriously injured or died. A family investigator from Rijksrecherche is in contact with the family, keeping them informed of developments and, if possible, answering their questions. The police no longer has contact with any of the family members during the investigation, as they are involved in the investigation." The Rijksrecherche investigation into the shooting incident has now been completed, reports the prosecutor's office in Amsterdam. The prosecutor's office will now decide whether or not to prosecute the officers. That decision is expected probably within a few weeks. The prosecutor's office may also request further investigation.

Memorial March

Sammy got an impressive farewell in his hometown. "There was a silent march for him, too. That was a huge expression of support for us."

Sammy's parents have set up an Instagram account to raise awareness about what is happening to their son. "Now we want to fight for justice. Our son deserves this. Because I still can't believe he's gone."