

## **Will Sammy Baker's death become a court case?**

After the Wetzlar fitness influencer was shot in Amsterdam, the final report is at the prosecutor's. Mother Justine reports incriminating details.

Investigations have been completed, the results handed over to the Dutch public Prosecutor's Office, but for the time being they remain under lock and key: Four months after Amsterdam police officers shot the Wetzlar fitness influencer Sammy Baker, it is now up to the public Prosecutor's Office to decide whether criminal proceedings will be brought against the officer who fired the three fatal shots. Even before the final report is released, there are some new details that shed new light on the case.

With each day, Sammy's family finally awaits answers to many nagging questions about the still-mysterious circumstances behind the 23-year-old's death. For the first time, mother Justine reports that she was close by when her son died.

It is three shots that have haunted the 48-year-old for four months as they echo in her ears day and night. When Sammy Baker is shot by Amsterdam police officers in a backyard in the district of Nieuw West in Amsterdam in broad daylight of August 13, she is only two blocks away, barely 250 meters. A few minutes earlier, Sammy had been sitting in the back seat of her car, then the situation suddenly escalated. The mother is blaming the Dutch police. Sammy Baker had met up with two friends in the Dutch city on August 11 to celebrate his 23rd birthday. Due to its liberal drug policy, Amsterdam has a special attraction to many young people who want to experiment with cannabis. This was probably also the case for the Wetzlar fitness-coach who otherwise completely rejected drugs and alcohol, because his health and his body were more important to him than anything else. Sammy Baker has probably consumed cannabis in a coffee shop on the evening of his birthday, reports the lawyer of the family, Richard Korver, to the newspaper Volkskrant. Traces of THC had been found during the autopsy, he said. The substance had apparently triggered a psychosis on Sammy Baker the same evening: his friends later reported a completely uncharacteristic, paranoid behavior.

The 23-year-old suddenly disappeared in the morning of the following day, no one knew where. In great concern, his mother and father reported him missing to the Amsterdam police and pointed out their son's confused state to the officers. No one could find Sammy Baker anywhere in the city, no matter how hard one of his friends was looking for him. Mother Justine then decided to go to there herself. Arriving in Amsterdam on August 13 after several hours of driving, Sammy sends his location via smartphone, and the friend also rushes there.

## **Police simply takes over – no negotiation needed**

Mother Justine remembers the moment they met in a parking lot in Rijswijkstraat clearly. Her son was standing in front of her in flip-flops, shorts, a shirt, a belly bag and mirrored sunglasses. He had a small backpack and a fishing rod in his hand. He seemed to be a complete stranger. She couldn't see his eyes, couldn't get through to him. No matter how much she talked to him and tried to convince him to get into the car.

Shortly after Sammy had finally taken a seat in the back seat, he jumped out of the car again and ran around restlessly. She said she felt helpless, unable to get to him. "I was so close to

taking him home," the mother reports. By chance, she says, a police officer came by, and the friend asked him for help. When the officer approached Sammy, he ran away, the policeman chased after him.

The pursuit ends in the backyard on Honselersdijkstraat. Within a very short time, more police officers arrive for reinforcement and block off a large area. What happens in the courtyard is known from a cell phone video: Sammy apparently holds a knife to his neck, several police officers pull out their guns as the 23-year-old slowly walks across the meadow towards them and then past them. He ignores the officers' shouts. Instead, Sammy Baker is heard demanding to get a doctor. But the police officers refuse. When the attempt to seize him with a police dog fails, the dog handler knocks the man from Wetzlar down from behind. An unmanageable fight on the ground develops. The police later said that Sammy Baker had stabbed one of the officers in the vest with a knife. Then mother Justine, still in the parking lot in the Rijswijkstraat, also hears the three shots. That the shots kill her son while he is still in the courtyard is something she does not know at that time. She first hears about this at the police station, when two young officers hand her Sammy's gold necklace with the words: "We are very sorry, your son has been shot."

Mother Justine makes serious accusations against the Dutch police, whom she had trusted, speaking of "execution." The police officers did not take fifteen minutes to de-escalate the situation and negotiate. They also did not call in a psychologist, but made "a quick process". Sammy's friend had run after him, had asked a policeman at the fence on the spot that he or the mother could talk to Sammy. Sammy had then been asked if that was what he wanted. When he did not answer in his psychotic state, it did not even come to an attempt, criticizes the mother.

For her it is certain that no danger had arisen from her son. According to the mother, contrary to initial police reports, the knife was not a 30-centimeter knife, but a 15-centimeter carving knife with a seven-centimeter blade and a wooden handle, which she had given to Sammy when he was about twelve years old. She assumes that Sammy had actually taken it with him to Amsterdam for fishing.

### **Human rights activists point out a massive problem**

Has Sammy Baker become the tenth victim of police violence in the Netherlands this year? According to a report by the human rights organization Controle Alt Delete (CAD), 16 people have already been killed by police violence in the bordering country in 2020, 13 of whom are said to have been in a confused state, like the 23-year-old from Wetzlar. Sammy Baker is listed by the CAD as victim number ten. Whether the CAD verdict is correct will have to be answered in the next few days by the public prosecutor's office and then possibly in court. When he took office about a year and a half ago, Amsterdam police chief Frank Paauw had announced a tougher approach and a hard line against mentally disturbed people. In an interview with the newspaper Het Parool, Paauw said at the time: "Confused people are more dangerous than terrorists."