

# COPLAN+CRANE CHRONICLES



## THE ATTORNEYS OF COPLAN + CRANE

As we continue to celebrate our firm's 10 year anniversary, we hope you enjoy reading our first newsletter. Our goal is to provide you and your family and friends with useful information that you can use in your daily lives, and to update you on cases we are handling.

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Record Settlement for Stroke Victim	p1
GOOOAAALLL!!!	
Jury Verdict for Professional Player And Coach	p2
In Memorium	p2
Fatigued Driver Kills Woman	p3
Drugs and Defective Products	p3
Attorney Spotlight	
Greg Coplan: Here to Help	p4

## RECORD SETTLEMENT FOR STROKE VICTIM

One of the biggest rewards of working at a personal injury law firm is helping improve the lives of people faced with big challenges. Recently, one of our clients received a county-record \$10 million settlement. That settlement makes our client's life far more manageable.

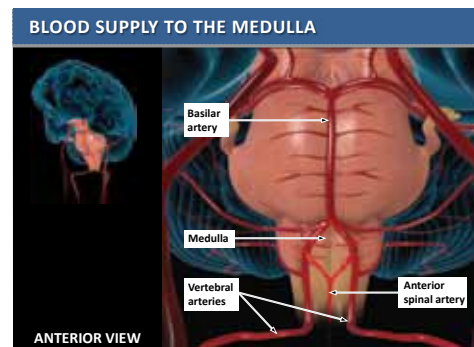
A resident of Northwest Illinois, Jacob Backus became a quadriplegic when medical personnel failed to diagnose and treat signs and symptoms of a stroke. Partners Greg Coplan and Ben Crane,

Jacob to pay for the lifelong, around-the-clock care he needs to survive.

When a person is having a stroke, time is critical. The sooner a stroke can be identified and treated, the better the odds for minimizing or avoiding brain damage. The medical community has developed an easy way to remember and identify the most common symptoms of a stroke, using the acronym "**FAST**." [See graphic below.]

Recognition of stroke and calling 9-1-1 will determine how quickly someone will receive help and treatment. Getting to a hospital rapidly will more likely lead to a better recovery. Unfortunately, in Jacob's case, the hospital staff's failure to diagnose and treat his stroke left him paralyzed, from the neck down.

"Our client did not receive the medical care he needed and deserved," Attorney Coplan says. "This settlement sends a message that healthcare providers will be held accountable for their actions." ■



along with co-counsel Kevin Burke, represented Jacob. The settlement allows

### REMEMBER THE KEY ELEMENTS IN IDENTIFYING A STROKE.

**F**  
**FACE**  
 Ask the person to smile.  
*Does one side of the face droop?*

**A**  
**ARM**  
 Ask the person to raise both arms.  
*Does one arm drift down?*

**S**  
**SPEECH**  
 Ask the person to repeat a phrase.  
*Is speech slurred or strange?*

**T**  
**TIME**  
 If you see any of these signs  
**call 9-1-1 right away.**

# GOOOAAALLL!!! JURY VERDICT FOR PROFESSIONAL PLAYER AND COACH

Injury victims are just numbers to insurance companies. But the truth is that every victim's case is unique, and many times, insurance company statistics cannot account for extraordinary people.

Ben Crane and Blake Vance knew the first day they met Daniel Sementuch he would be well-liked by a jury. "We knew immediately that Daniel was the type of person that everyone wanted to be friends with: honest, hard working, passionate, and kind."

That is why, when Liberty Mutual decided to engage in last minute settlement negotiations, after dragging the case out for three years, Ben and Blake counseled Daniel that he should accept nothing less than a \$450,000 settlement. When Liberty Mutual refused to offer more than \$350,000, Daniel decided to let 12 jurors decide his case. When the jury delivered a \$582,800 verdict for Daniel, it confirmed his lawyers' assessment from the first day.

Sementuch, originally from Argentina, played professional soccer for the Chicago Power. For more than 20 years, Sementuch has trained elite youth soccer players. More than 20 of his players have earned college soccer scholarships under his tutelage. But Daniel truly makes the biggest impact teaching and coaching underprivileged kids in Aurora. "He really makes a difference for all these kids. He's teaching them not just soccer, but also communication skills and teamwork," Blake says.

One late afternoon, Daniel Sementuch was traveling on

Addison west of Sacramento when a young male, who was admittedly lost, made a sharp left turn in front of Sementuch, causing a horrible head-on crash. An ambulance took Daniel to the emergency room.

While his injuries were not life threatening (he was, thankfully, wearing his seatbelt), Daniel suffered injuries to the discs in his neck and back, which caused pinched nerves. Despite years of physical therapy and injections in his back, Daniel's pain lingers. At trial, his team of doctors testified that his injuries will cause him pain for the rest of his life. It will change the way he coaches. He will require more spinal injections and possibly, spinal fusion surgery.

Liberty Mutual admitted their policyholder was 100% at fault the first day of trial. "The case then centered around the extent of Daniel's injuries, how much those injuries were going to cause problems for him in the future, and what that was all worth," Blake says. "We just had fundamental differences with the defense on the value of Daniel's injuries."

Daniel had to stop coaching for some time, but slowly returned to doing what he loves to do. It is now much more difficult for him to use the method that is most effective for teaching children soccer – physically demonstrating moves.

Sometimes the collective wisdom of 12 people surpasses that of insurance company actuaries. That's bound to happen when insurance companies ignore the compelling stories of the lives their policyholders have ruined. ■

## IN MEMORIAM

**We here at Coplan & Crane wish  
to express our deep condolences  
to the families and loved ones  
of two clients who passed away this year.**

**Jeremy Lee Law** of Rockford was only 10 when he passed away peacefully in January. Jeremy was a special little boy whose strength and courage touched many hearts. Although brain damage affected his life severely, he inspired many people throughout his short time in our world. Jeremy leaves behind a courageous mother and father and many brothers and sisters who loved him dearly.

We also fondly remember **Francisco Fresco**, who died in March at the age of 58. Francisco was born in Cuba and moved to Miami with his family at a young age. The Frescos eventually settled in Rockford, where Francisco attended public schools and later became an assembly worker, a cook, and a gardener, as well as a devoted family man. Francisco fought mightily after he was injured in a railroad accident. He inspired and motivated all of us to be grateful for everything we have.

**We send our sincere  
sympathies to the families of both  
Jeremy and Francisco.**

# WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU HIRE US

IF YOU'VE BEEN INJURED DUE TO SOMEBODY ELSE'S  
NEGLIGENT OR CARELESS BEHAVIOR,  
YOU MAY HAVE GROUNDS TO FILE A PERSONAL INJURY CLAIM IN ILLINOIS.

## WHY DO PEOPLE HIRE ATTORNEYS?

People might hire attorneys after being injured in these types of accidents:

-  Car Accidents
-  Truck and Bus Accidents
-  Railroad Accidents
-  Workplace Injuries
-  Accidents Involving Dangerous Products
-  Medical Malpractice
-  Property Accidents

## MEETING WITH A CHICAGO PERSONAL INJURY LAWYER

When you meet with an attorney for your free case consultation, he or she will determine if you have a valid claim against a negligent party. The purpose of this consultation is to gather the basic facts about how the accident happened.

**Communication is critical to building a successful personal injury case.**



Bring supporting documentation to your case evaluation for the attorney to review, including the following:

1. Medical Records
2. Insurance Information
3. Documentation of Lost Wages

## CAN AN ATTORNEY REACH A SETTLEMENT BEFORE TRIAL?

**YES.**

Many personal injury claims are resolved before a lawsuit is filed. Your attorney will negotiate with insurance companies and other parties to obtain a favorable settlement on your behalf.

If a settlement offer is made, your attorney will work with you to determine whether the offer is acceptable.



**The decision is ultimately up to you.**

## WHAT IS DISCOVERY?

During the discovery process, attorneys will question:

-  each party
-  injury victims
-  involved third parties
-  doctors

about the claim. During this phase, lawyers from both sides of the legal dispute may require parties on the other side to (1) answer interrogatories, (2) produce accident-related documents and (3) provide depositions (statements made under oath) from witnesses and parties involved in the accident.

## WHAT IS A PERSONAL INJURY CASE?

Personal injury is an area of law allowing an accident victim to pursue compensation for damages sustained in an accident.

This includes compensation for:

-  Medical Bills
-  Pain & Suffering
-  Lost Wages & Future Lost Wages
-  Other Monetary Damages

## PREPARING YOUR CASE

After you choose to hire an attorney, he or she will investigate your case to fully understand how you were injured. The extent and costs of your injuries are determined in this process. Your lawyer will deal directly with insurance companies responsible for your compensation and, if necessary, the attorney for the party who injured you.

In order to build the strongest case possible, your attorney may:

-  Collect Additional Medical Records
-  Collect Additional Police Records
-  Visit the Accident Scene to Collect Evidence
-  Employ Accident Reconstruction Teams
-  Interview Witnesses
-  Retain Experts

He or she will then attempt to resolve the case out of court or, if necessary, file a lawsuit against the party who caused your accident.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CASE GOES TO TRIAL?

If a settlement cannot be reached, and only at your discretion, your lawyer can file a lawsuit in court. As the plaintiff, you are responsible for proving, in front of judge and jury, that the negligence of a person or business (the defendant) caused your injuries. Preparation for trial takes time and effort. Your attorney will prepare all necessary documents, file all necessary motions and work to prove fault in your accident case.



## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A VERDICT OR SETTLEMENT IS REACHED?

If an attorney is able to obtain a favorable settlement or verdict on your behalf, you will receive compensation for your injuries and other accident-related damages. Most attorneys work on a **contingency fee basis**, meaning all expenses and upfront costs are handled throughout the litigation process and reimbursed by you at the conclusion of the case. You only owe your attorney (typically between 33 and 40 percent) after a settlement or verdict has been reached on your behalf. This number range is dependent on variables specific to each individual case.

**HIRING AN ATTORNEY PAYS OFF  
IF YOU'VE BEEN INJURED IN AN ACCIDENT.**

**DON'T ACCEPT LESS THAN YOU DESERVE.**

# FATIGUED DRIVER KILLS WOMAN

Jennie Pivot stopped for traffic, while police cleared a disabled vehicle. A Black Horse Carriers semi-trailer traveled at 63 mph toward Jennie. The truck struck Jennie's car, without braking, killing her instantly.

The driver was prosecuted and pled guilty to violation of "Scott's Law," an Illinois statute which requires drivers to change lanes if it is safe to do so. Otherwise they must reduce speed and proceed with caution when approaching a stationary emergency vehicle displaying flashing warning lights.

But there were more safety violations. Footage obtained by the Pivot family's attorney, Greg Coplan, shows the driver falling

asleep before the crash.

While the focus of the Pivot family's lawsuit is on the conduct of the driver, "we have some big concerns about the level of supervision and training Blackhorse provided on the dangers of driving while fatigued," says Greg.

Recently the government has taken steps to reduce fatigued trucking violations which make it harder for companies to "cheat" on the number of hours their drivers are on the road. These are "steps in the right direction," Greg says. At the same time, however, the trucking industry has been pushing back against reform and wants to ease limits on driver hours. ■



# DRUGS & DEFECTIVE PRODUCTS

## METAL-ON-METAL HIPS AGAIN PROVE TO HAVE BEEN A BAD IDEA

We are now finalizing disbursements for many of our clients in the Stryker Hip Implant Settlement. This comes on the heels of the DePuy ASR Hip Implant Settlements, which began in 2014 and are continuing. To date, we have recovered over \$5.4 million dollars for victims of defective metal-on-metal hips.

## WE ALSO CURRENTLY REPRESENT VICTIMS HARMED BY THE FOLLOWING MEDICAL DEVICES & DRUGS:

- **Transvaginal Mesh:**  
*Mesh fails in woman treated for incontinence and organ prolapse*
- **Zimmer knee replacements:**  
*Device may fail or loosen*
- **Invokana (diabetes medication):**  
*causes ketoacidosis*
- **Zofran (anti-morning sickness and nausea drug):** *causes birth defects*

- **Actos (diabetes medication):**  
*causes bladder cancer*
- **Xarelto (blood thinner):** *causes stroke and fatal internal bleeding*

## GENETICALLY MODIFIED CORN DEVASTATES U.S. FARMERS EXPORTS TO CHINA

When China began rejecting U.S. corn imports in June 2013, the price of corn plummeted, and U.S. farmers lost their share of China's import market. The losses to U.S. farmers will likely exceed \$3.4 billion, and is continuing even today. We are preparing to file dozens of lawsuits on behalf of U.S. farmers against Syngenta because they mislead farmers, exporters and distributors into believing China would allow corn shipments into their country. We will be filing our clients' cases by November 1st. Because time is of the essence, please contact us immediately, if you are interested in pursuing a claim. ■



## **GREG COPLAN: HERE TO HELP**

Personal injury attorney Greg Coplan doesn't hesitate to answer when asked why he became a lawyer.

He knows who to credit for his career choice. "My father's been a small-town lawyer since 1965, and I watched him listen and relate to people," Greg says. "He's always worked hard to help people, and that was a huge motivation for me to become a lawyer. I'm here to help people like he's always done."

With that in mind, Greg attended Northern Illinois University College of Law after graduating from the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. Greg received his law degree in 1992, and over the more than two decades he's been in practice, has become a very well-respected Chicago-area litigator, winning high value cases on behalf of injured clients and their families

throughout Illinois and across the country. He gains a lot of satisfaction from his work, first from giving his injured or grieving clients hope and serving as a pillar of support, and then ultimately winning compensation for his clients—the money they need to pay medical bills, make up for lost income and, in many cases, ensuring they won't have to ever worry about money again.

Greg spends countless hours getting to know his clients, becoming emotionally invested in them. "If I don't understand what my clients' lives are like, how on earth can I represent them?" he says. "If I don't know their story, I can't tell their story or plead their case to our juries."

Greg acknowledges that, like every litigator, he possesses a strong competitive streak. Simply put, he hates to lose and loves to win—especially against "Rambo-style litigators" who abuse the system, he says. But he makes sure he keeps that trait in check. "I can't let my personal competitive nature interfere with my most important job," he says, "and that's to be certain that my clients are taken care of. That's what motivates me the most."

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