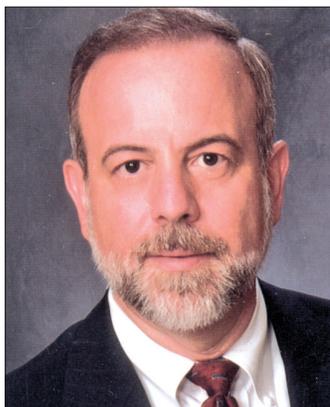


MISSOURI LAWYERS WEEKLY

Teen suffers traumatic brain injury after accident

Settles with Ford Motor Company



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Confidential Settlement

A driver who suffered a traumatic brain injury in a car accident has settled her St. Louis City case against the other driver and the automobile manufacturer for a confidential amount.

On July 3, 2001, Sarai Slaughter was driving her 1985 Ford Escort hatchback eastbound on Chippewa Street approaching the intersection with Hampton

Avenue in the city of St. Louis. Richard Weith, who was working for his drywall business — Missouri Taping, was driving a Chevy pickup truck north on Hampton.

As Slaughter, 17, made a left turn with a green light onto southbound Hampton, Weith ran a red light and crashed into the driver's door of her hatchback. Slaughter suffered a traumatic brain injury, a broken rib and multiple abdominal and pelvic injuries, including a crushed spleen — which required nearly a month of hospitalization and two months of rehabilitation.

The injuries left Slaughter confined to a wheelchair with significant cognitive deficit.

Slaughter contended that her injuries were the result of Weith's negligence and the defective design of the hatchback, which was severely deformed during the collision. She argued that Ford Motor Company should have made the car "stiffer" along the driver's side by strengthening the component parts — enabling them to resist the incoming pickup truck and protect Slaughter from injuries, which occurred when the driver's door separated from the "B pillar"

and intruded into the car.

Ford contended that strengthening the hatchback would not have prevented any significant crush or deformation because of the difference in size and weight between the two vehicles and the speed of the oncoming pickup truck. Ford argued that there was such a tremendous delivery of destructive energy from the collision that the suggested improvements would not have made a difference.

Just before closing arguments during the second week of trial, the parties reached a confidential settlement.

Confidential

Type of Action: Automobile negligence; product liability

Type of Injuries: Traumatic brain injury, broken rib, crushed spleen

Court/Case Number/Date: St. Louis City Circuit Court/022-01591/March 23, 2005

Caption: Slaughter v. Ford Motor Company, et al.

Judge, Jury or ADR: Jury

Name of Judge: Robert Dierker

Verdict or Settlement: Confidential settlement

Special Damages: \$390,000 past medical expenses; \$12.6 million future medical and custodial expenses; \$60,000 past lost wages; \$1.4 million future lost wages

Allocation of Fault: N/A

Last Offer: N/A

Last Demand: N/A

Attorneys for Plaintiff: Martin L. Perron and Maria V. Perron, The Perron Law Firm, St. Louis

Insurance Carrier: Western America Insurance Company for defendant Missouri Taping; none disclosed for defendant Ford Motor Company

Plaintiff's Experts: Dr. Timothy Buchman, St. Louis (trauma surgeon); Dr. Catherine Doty, St. Louis (future medical needs); Tim Finley, St. Louis (accident reconstruction); Leroy Grossman, St. Louis (economist); Dean Jacobson, Tempe, Ariz. (structures/materials, vehicle design, crash worthiness); Paul Lewis, Birmingham, Ala. (biomechanics)

Defendants' Experts: Dr. Charles Hatsell, San Antonio, Texas (biomechanics); Larry Ragan, Livonia, Mich. (structures, vehicle design); Greg Smith, Orem, Utah (accident reconstruction, crash worthiness)