

Gießener Allgemeine

Fight for Sammy does not stop

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Fitness influencer Sammy Baker: two years after the fatal shooting in Amsterdam on August 13, 2020, there is a new graffito on Wetzlar's Karl-Kellner-Ring. © Red

Two years ago, Central Hesse influencer Sammy Baker was shot dead by Amsterdam police, and his parents continue to want justice for their son. Today, on the anniversary of his death, a protest vigil is planned.

On August 11, 2022, he would have celebrated his 25th birthday. Together with friends, with parents, with his loved ones. But August 13, 2020, changed everything. On that summery Thursday, Sammy Baker's life was snuffed out. By gunshots of Amsterdam police officers. "It's still very, very hard, even after two years," says Justine Seewald-Krieger. What's going on inside Sammy Baker's mother - it's hard to imagine.

Time heals wounds only to a limited extent. The deep pain remains. And this is echoed in almost every sentence by Justine Seewald-Krieger. But so is her will to fight. Sammy's mother wants justice for her son. She lives this struggle. So does Sammy's father, Kai Baker.

Sammy was a well-known fitness influencer who was born in Giessen, played in the basketball major league here and studied environmental management. His father's family still lives in Giessen.

Today marks the second anniversary of Sammy's death. A new graffiti by Willie Snyder at the entrance to the parking garage on Wetzlar's Karl-Kellner-Ring features the young man's portrait. Justine Seewald-Krieger takes a selfie. In her photo, mother and son are united.

Sammy had gone to the Netherlands with friends two years ago to celebrate his 23rd birthday on August 11. The family's lawyer had first reported cannabis use in December 2020. The Wetzlarer is said to have shared a joint and a muffin, a so-called space cake, with the friends. According to statistics, food with cannabis cause negative effects such as anxiety attacks or paranoia in less experienced users.

The young man's behavior reportedly changed abruptly as a result of the drug use. The friends described it as atypical and paranoid. On the morning of the following day, Sammy Baker disappeared. In great concern, his parents reported him missing to the Amsterdam police and pointed out the confused state of their son to the officers.

Mother Justine set off for Amsterdam. When she arrived there on August 13, Sammy shared his location via smartphone. A friend also rushed there. They met in a parking lot on Rijswijkstraat. The 23-year-old seemed a complete stranger. The attempt to give him a ride in the car failed. When the friend asked a police officer for help, Sammy took ran away. The chase ended in the backyard on Honselersdijkstraat.

What happened there is documented in a cell phone video: Sammy Baker, who appeared confused, apparently held a knife to his neck. Several police officers drew their service weapons. In the video, Baker can be heard repeatedly asking for a doctor. The police officers refused. Meanwhile, the mother, who was standing about 200 meters away in a parking lot, was not called in by police as a possible mediator. When the seizure with a police dog failed, the officer leading the animal knocked down the Wetzlarer from behind. The officers claim that there was a battle on the ground. Four shots were fired. They killed Sammy at point blank range. "This got completely out of hand. Crazy, just crazy," says Justine Seewald-Krieger.

For two years, the family of the young man has been fighting for the case to be solved and for possible responsible persons to be held accountable. In May 2021, the Dutch prosecutor's office had announced that no charges would be brought against the two police officers who fired the shots.

Meanwhile, the family of the man killed will go to civil court. The case is against the police as a whole and is scheduled to begin in the fall. Justine Seewald-Krieger and Kai Baker are pleased to have achieved "two successes" in the meantime. This above all, to straighten the image of their son in the public. The claim that the "chief's knife" carried by Sammy had a blade 30 centimeters long had to be revised. In fact, it was a carving knife with a blade only seven centimeters long. The mother had given it to her son at some point.

The Amsterdam police chief Frank Paauw also had to row back. Before the independent complaints committee of the National Police, he admitted a false claim. Contrary to his original statement, the vest of a police officer did not show any punctures from Sammy's knife.

On the anniversary of Sammy's death, a vigil has been registered in Frankfurt. It will take place today from 11 am on the busy Zeil between Stiftstraße and Hasengasse. It will be smaller and quieter than the demonstration in Amsterdam a year ago. Raising awareness in public and inform about the case, should nevertheless be connected with the commemoration.

Two years after the shooting - the pain does not subside. Nor does the disappointment. Sammy's mother still misses a reaction from the Dutch side. But nothing of the kind has happened so far, no human movement - "quite badly", finds Justine Seewald-Krieger. "Has my son's life been worth nothing to them?"