Vorhies Show To Air Sunday

By SUSAN LOVING  Staff Writer

Howard Cosell's Sports Magazine is expected to raise some questions as a result of its investigation into the death of Virginia Tech football player Robert Vorhies.

The circumstances surrounding the death of Vorhies, a New Jersey freshman who died in Blacksburg Nov. 21, 1977 after a football practice followed by punishment drills, will be probed on an edition of the show expected to air Sunday, March 26.

Robert's father Jerome Vorhies said Tuesday he had been interviewed by sportscaster Howard Cosell for four hours. "Howard Cosell and ABC said they would stick with this," Vorhies said of his continued efforts to uncover the reason his son died.

ABC went with the story basically because "Mr. Vorhies was so adamant," the show's assistant producer, Mike Klatt said. Vorhies' persistence has kept the story of his son's death in the news even after a grand jury, convened to clear the air, concluded in January that neither the university nor the state attorney general's office had evidence to support legal charges. Therefore, that avenue was not pursued.

However, Vorhies said Tuesday the Charlottesville lawyer he has hired to look into the case has been investigating for eight weeks. They will decide soon what course of action should be taken, Vorhies said. "It's not going to go away," Vorhies vowed concerning his investigation.

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coach was to blame for Robert Vorhies' death.

Vorhies has been conducting his own long-distance inquiries into his son's death, and has expressed dissatisfaction at official findings to date.

A story in the Washington Star, picked up by the Chicago Tribune on page one of the Sunday, February 19 issue, was headlined "A teen's brutal run - to death" and was sympathetic to Vorhies. The university was portrayed in a negative light.

However, Klatt described the ABC show, which was in the process of being edited when he was interviewed, as "very representative." The audience will be left to draw its own conclusions about the Vorhies incident and the powers of coaches in general, Klatt said. "I don't think we draw any conclusions per se."

Klatt said Cosell would not only tell the story surrounding Vorhies' death, but that he would also raise some questions not necessarily about this case specifically, but about the overall freedom coaches have in running their programs.

In January, a grand jury convened by the Montgomery Commonwealth's Attorney agreed with the university in its conclusion that there was no neglect or wrongdoing in Vorhies death. Vorhies died in his dormitory room after what coaches described as a light workout and a series of punishment drills.

The drills were run, coaches said, because Vorhies had been discovered with beer in his room the previous weekend. The grand jury reiterated the autopsy findings of Dr. David Oxley, deputy chief medical examiner for western Virginia, that Vorhies died from "probably sudden cardiac arrhythmia with acute heart failure."

The grand jury concluded that there was no evidence that someone could die simply from exercise. The exact cause of death was not pinpointed. The jury noted studies had been done on athletes who died suddenly with no apparent cause ever discovered.

Vorhies still contends that his son ran two, and not one set of punishment drills, as the grand jury found. He declared, "doctors and coaches that don't think that exercise and exertion can kill you - it's got to stop with this case."

Vorhies said he understood