

18-year-old drowns in quarry pond near Millersylvania State Park

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A former Timberline High School student and athlete, 18, drowned Saturday afternoon near Millersylvania State Park, according to the Thurston County Sheriff's Office. Timberline football coach James Jones confirmed the man was Max Aunese.

About 4:30 p.m. Saturday, deputies and an area fire department were dispatched to the 1600 block of Maytown Road Southwest, Lt. Ray Brady said. That location, which is near the park, is an old quarry pond that has become a popular swimming hole, he said.

Friends of Aunese said they swam across the pond and were returning when their 18-year-old friend suddenly went under water. The friends then found him and brought him to shore.

Attempts to revive him were unsuccessful, Brady

said.

Aunese was from Lacey and his autopsy is set for Monday, Thurston County Coroner Gary Warnock said.

Reaction from the local sports community began to pour in late Saturday, with Twitter accounts associated with Capital and Olympia high schools tweeting to offer condolences to the Timberline athletic community.

Jones said Aunese, who played receiver and free safety for the Blazers, will be remembered as a student-athlete who was relentlessly positive and optimistic — a team captain and leader.

"He's a kid who's walking after practice with a million-dollar smile," Jones said. "When things weren't going the way we wanted, he'd pump everyone up, encourage others through whatever they were going through both on and off the field. Max was a great kid to get the attitude up. ... He was a phenomenal human be-

ing."

When Timberline was losing at halftime or energy was low during a practice, Aunese would rally the team.

"He was always a guy looking up, looking to the positive and with a smile and the true attitude behind it, even when things were tough for him," Jones said.

The team will discuss what to do with Aunese's No. 13 jersey. Jones said he'd like to see it memorialized rather than retired — to have whatever player wears No. 13 in the future to have to earn it, embodying the things Aunese stood for: Positivity, hard work and leadership.

"Whoever wears No. 13 is a kid who pumps everyone up, who is a program guy," Jones said. "13 will be a number you have to earn. I think that's the direction I want to go with the number."

Jones said the team will have a team-wide Zoom call on Sunday evening, giving players a chance to

talk through their feelings.

Nick Mullen, who left Timberline following the 2019 season to take the head coaching job at Olympia High School, echoed what many have said about Aunese. The infectious smile immediately comes to mind.

"You couldn't ask for a better leader, a better kid in the community," Mullen said. "It was just his Polynesian culture, he brought it to everybody. I just love that kid. You never hear a negative word about him. He's never in trouble."

Mullen, who can get fiery on the sidelines, said Aunese reminded him why he got into the business of coaching in the first place.

"He just had that grin on his face coming out of the huddle, and I'd calm down," Mullen said. "It's football, it's gotta be fun. I took that couple years off (from coaching). He reminded me why I love coaching so much. ... If I was having a bad day, he always knew how to make me smile."

A gofundme has been set up for Aunese's family.

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