



JURY VERDICT

Motor Vehicle Accident **\$3,400,000**

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Jury awards Syracuse man more than \$3 million for car crash injuries

Syracuse, NY -- A state Supreme Court jury Wednesday awarded a Syracuse man \$3.39 million in damages as compensation for severe injuries he suffered in a car crash three years ago.

Matthew Hidek, now 42, suffered severe orthopedic and head injuries in the crash that occurred Oct. 7, 2009, at Route 92 and Thorntree Hill Road in DeWitt, according to lawyer Michael Porter.

Porter said Hidek continues to suffer from the effects of a traumatic brain injury that has affected his memory and concentration.

Hidek was a Ph.D. student at the Syracuse University Maxwell School and a professor at Cazenovia College at the time of the 2009 crash. He was on his way to work about 7:30 a.m. that day when a second vehicle pulled out into the path of his vehicle, Porter said.

The defendant in the lawsuit was Victoria Scalzo, the 17-year-old driver of the car that pulled in front of Hidek's vehicle, Porter said.

Following a seven-day trial before Justice James Murphy, the jury deliberated about 5 1/2 hours before reaching the verdict awarding the damages, Porter said.

By Jim O'Hara, The Post-Standard

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According to Porter, the defense conceded liability for the crash but challenged whether Hidek actually suffered from a traumatic brain injury. Several medical providers were called as witnesses to testify in Hidek's behalf on that issue, Porter said.

The damages included money for past and future medical expenses and lost wages. The largest portion was the \$1.8 million awarded for future lost wages, Porter said.

"He was a very accomplished academic who had a lot of vocational potential ahead of him. But those are gone now," Porter said. Hidek has been able to return to teaching on a part-time basis, the lawyer said.

The damages also included \$325,000 for Hidek's wife, Melissa, for the loss of her husband's services as a result of his injuries, Porter said.

Hidek is a military veteran and the father of two daughters, the lawyer said.

The amount of the verdict was "pretty noteworthy" in that such multimillion-dollar damage awards usually involve death cases, Porter said.