

The South Carolina Jury Verdict Reporter

The Most Current and Complete Summary of South Carolina Jury Verdicts

October 2026

Statewide Jury Verdict Coverage

1 SCJVR 10

In This Issue

Civil Jury Verdicts

Timely coverage of civil jury verdicts in South Carolina including court, presiding judge, parties, attorneys and results.

Wrongful Death - A teenage baseball star (age 16) at Boiling Springs High suffered fatal injuries when his friend's father (with a BAC of .243) crashed a Polaris UTV and it rolled over in a ditch – the decedent's family sued the father and his mother on a social host theory alleging negligence in serving the boy alcohol and also for operating the UTV while intoxicated – the defendants (because of an insurance snafu) didn't answer the complaint and a default was taken – the case was then tried solely on damages and the estate took a total of \$53,000,000 which included \$8,000,000 for survival damages, \$40,000,000 more for wrongful death and finally \$5,000,000 in punitives against the father only

Harrell v. Bell, 2025-CP-42-00502

Plaintiff: Douglas E. Jennings, Liam D. Duffy and Reynolds H.

Blankenship, Jr., Yarborough

Applegate, Charleston and Taylor

Schuster, Anderson & Schuster,

Mt. Pleasant

Defense: Wilson S. Sheldon and Jane

M. Cajka, Willson Carter Jones &

Baxley, Greenville for Randall

Amanda L.C. Bradley and Grace K.

Lesesne, McAngus Goudelock &

COUNTY OF SPARTANBURG

Lacey Harrell as Personal Representative
of the Estate of E.H., a deceased minor,

Plaintiff,

vs.

Randall Bell and Somer Bell,

Defendants.

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
FOR THE SEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
CASE NO.: 2025-CP-42-00502

VERDICT FORM

- (1) For survival damages, we the jury unanimously find for the Plaintiff against the Defendants in the amount of:

8 million Dollars

Proceed to Question 2.

- (2) For wrongful death damages, we the jury unanimously find for the Plaintiff against the Defendants in the amount of:

40 million Dollars

Proceed to Question 3.

- (3) We the jury unanimously find by clear and convincing evidence that Defendant Randall Bell acted recklessly in causing the death of E.H.:

YES ☒ NO ☐

If you answered YES to Question 3, proceed to Question 4.

If you answered NO to Question 3, stop – and sign and date your verdict form.

- (4) For punitive damages, we the jury unanimously find for the Plaintiff against Defendant Randall Bell in the amount of:

5 million Dollars

1

The Harrell v. Bell jury verdict form

Courie, Greenville for Somer
Verdict: \$53,000,000 for plaintiff
including \$5,000,000 in punitive
damages against Randall
Court: **Spartanburg**

Judge: Grace Knie

Date: 9-16-26

Ethan Harrell, age 16, was a rising
junior at Boiling Springs High School.
He was a star pitcher on the baseball

A Notable Alabama Verdict

Defamation/False Light - A walk-on freshman basketball player at the University of Alabama alleged he was defamed and placed in a false light by a New York Times article that said he was in the vehicle when one of his Alabama teammates was involved in a drive-by shooting – the freshman was not in the car and the author's anonymous source was incorrect – the plaintiff prevailed on both counts at trial against the newspaper and was awarded compensatory damages of \$1.75 million – he also took \$7.25 million in punitive damages which will be subject to a reduction to comply with the state scheme limiting those damages to three times the compensatory damages

Spears v. New York Times, 7:23-692

Plaintiff: R. Matt Glover, *Prince Glover Hayes*, Tuscaloosa, M. Virginia Buck, Northport and Stephen P. New, Beckley, WV

Defense: Chad R. Bowman and Emmy Parsons, *Ballard Spahr*, Washington D.C. and Michael L. Bell, John G. Thompson and Matthew J. Winne, *Lightfoot Franklin & White*, Birmingham, AL

Verdict: \$9,250,000 for plaintiff

Federal: **Tuscaloosa, Alabama**

Judge: Annemarie C. Axon

Date: 8-20-26

Kai Spears was a freshman walk-on basketball player at the University of Alabama in March of 2023 – like a lot of walk-ons at this level, Spears, who is from Pittsburgh, PA, didn't play in a single game that year. The team was very good that year and was chasing a national championship. A scandal enveloped

the team late on the night of January 14, 2023. The day had started well. Alabama had handily throttled LSU 106-66. The party moved from campus to Tuscaloosa's Strip (an area of bars) near Bryant Denny Stadium.

It was now much later in the evening and bars on the Strip were emptying. Jamea Harris, age 23, was a passenger in a vehicle just off the Strip. A member of the team, Darius Miles, was in the vehicle with a childhood friend, Michael Davis. It was driven by fellow basketball player, Brandon Miller, now with the Charlotte Hornets.

Davis exited the Miller vehicle and approached the Harris vehicle. He had a conflict with her boyfriend. Davis fired his weapon and struck Harris. She was killed. Davis was later convicted of Capital Murder. Miles was charged too with providing Davis the gun. The charges against him remain pending. Miller had simply driven his teammate Miles to the scene (Miles had asked for a ride) and was not involved in the shooting.

In addition to the set of facts regarding the shooting, it is important to note one more. Spears was not present at all. He'd been drinking that night at Moe's Original BBQ bar (Miller in fact got the underage Spears, who was 18, into the bar) and was in a car a few blocks away with friends. He had no involvement with the shooting and wasn't in the car with Miller or anyone else.

Moving forward to March 15, 2023, it was the eve of the NCAA basketball tournament. Alabama was a top seed and drew national interest not just because of the team's basketball exploits but also because of the recent shooting. Miles had

been dismissed from the team. Miller was still playing but opposing fans mocked the team and there were t-shirts at the SEC tournament in reference to Alabama that stated "*Killin' our way through the SEC in '23.*" The next day Alabama would open NCAA tournament play. It was a giant story at the time.

On that date (3-15-23 at 8:00 p.m.) the New York Times published an article by a sports reporter, Billy Witz, that added new facts and color to the shooting. The story (relying on anonymous sources) indicated there was another person in Miller's car. It was Spears. This was not true. As described above, Spears was not there. It was a team manager that was in the car. Thereafter Spears would recall being taunted on campus as if he had been involved in the shooting, fraternity members mocking him as a killer. Spears also indicated the false link to the shooting will follow him permanently. He stayed another year at Alabama before transferring to Marshall University where his father is the athletic director.

The 2023 basketball season ended for No. 1 ranked Alabama in Louisville in the regional semifinals when they were upset by San Diego State. It was 3-24-23. Spears filed a defamation and false light lawsuit against the New York Times two months later on the last day of May. His theory was simple enough. The story was false in linking him to the shooting. The story not only had a defamatory meaning (he was involved in a shooting), it also placed him in a false light. His proof burden on defamation was that the statements were false and had been negligently published in relying on a single anonymous source. It was his

The South Carolina Jury Verdict Reporter

9462 Brownsboro Road, No. 133

Louisville, Kentucky 40241

502-644-9017

Online at Juryverdicts.net

Timely South Carolina Jury Verdict Coverage

Ordering is Easy

The South Carolina Jury Verdict Reporter

The Most Current and Complete Summary of South Carolina Jury Verdicts

Order in the Online store or return this form

Name

Firm Name

Address

City, State Zip

Your e-mail

Return with your check to:

The South Carolina Jury Verdict Reporter

At the above address

_____ \$399.00 for a one-year subscription to the
South Carolina Jury Verdict Reporter
(~~\$422.94~~ *with tax*)