

Thomas Colucci: I was an All-State Cross Country runner in High School.

Katelyn Cody: I am really good at making homemade bagels

Ethan Taylor: I am really good at juggling things

Desmond Buckmire: I learned how to play guitar mostly through Youtube and now I play at a church.

Katelyn owns a successful bagel company that often caters big events like the State Cross Country meet in her home state of Illinois. This year, the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) has asked Katelyn to make bagels for a breakfast spread meant for the athletes competing in the state finals located in Peoria, IL. Being a runner herself in high school, Katelyn understands that many athletes get extremely nervous on race day, especially before as big of a race as the state finals. In an effort to put the athletes at ease, Katelyn asks her friend Desmond to bring his guitar and play while the breakfast buffet is going on. Music always helped Katelyn before her races, so she thought the athletes might appreciate it.

Before the athletes arrive for breakfast the morning before the race, Ethan, who happens to be staying at the same hotel with his family since his brother is racing in the state finals, decides to go exploring. He comes across the bagel spread and can't resist. He picks up a few bagels and begins to practice his juggling skills. Though he is very good at juggling, Desmond begins to practice for his breakfast performance which startles Ethan and causes him to drop the bagels onto the floor. After looking around to make sure nobody saw, he puts the bagels back on the pile and quickly leaves the room. Desmond saw the bagels fall but figured because of the 5 second rule, it didn't matter. Furthermore, he had no intention on having bagels. He continues to warm up. Ethan heads back to his family and tells his brother to avoid the bagels because they were on the floor and carries on with his morning. Ethan's brother tells the rest of his team that the bagels are contaminated, so they all avoid them.

Thomas, who happens to be a returning All-State Cross Country Champion looking for a repeat of his success last year, arrives at the breakfast room only a few moments later. Not knowing that the bagels have fallen to the floor, he grabs one and slathers peanut butter on to it- his go to pre-race snack. He grabs a few more bagels for his teammates and joins them at a table. Both Thomas and his running buddy eat a contaminated bagel.

30 minutes before race time Thomas and his running buddy are very sick and cannot compete. It turns out that the floor had just been washed with a chemical that is toxic if ingested. Since the bagels weren't on the floor for that long, the boys won't suffer any long-term consequences, but they will experience vomiting and digestive issues for a few hours.

As a result, Ethan's brother and his team place very well in the race and end up taking home a state title. Thomas and his running buddy cannot compete, so their team has to use their alternates and thus they don't place as well as they might have. This results in no state titles and Thomas, a senior, has no chance of reclaiming his All-State title for a second time.

What are the ethical issues in this scenario, and who is responsible for them? How much responsibility does each guilty party have?

Ethics:

In this scenario, Ethan and Desmond lack accountability as the responsible parties. It was unwise and unsanitary for Ethan to use food to practice juggling. Furthermore, when Ethan dropped the bagels, he should have known not to put them back. Throwing the food away would have been best at that point, and even paying Katelyn for the lost bagels, would have remedied the issue. Although there is a small cost to Ethan to pay for the bagels, the value of Tommy and his buddy's health are much greater. Desmond shares responsibility in Ethan's actions, but the weight should not fall on him. Desmond should know that the "5 second rule" does not actually exist. It was up to Desmond to hold Ethan accountable for his actions, or at least find the bagels that fell and dispose of them properly. Desmond failed to do so, and the runners became sick because of his role as a bystander.