

New Jersey Law Journal

12-29-2006

\$135,000 for Skeet Injury

Belton v. Storms:

A housepainter injured when a skeet machine discharged settled his suit for \$135,000 on Nov. 30.

Chris Belton of Mendham was painting a building on the property of Brian Storms in Far Hills on Dec. 17, 2004, when Belton bent down to move a skeet machine that was in the way. It went off inches from his face, fracturing the bones above his right eye in 14 places and propelling him backward into a wall, where he hit his head, says his lawyer, **Andrew O'Connor**, of **Nagel Rice & Mazie** in Roseland.

Belton lost consciousness for several days, underwent reconstructive surgery and was out of work for several months.

Now 45, with a metal plate in his face, he still sees floating spots. He no longer works independently but has teamed up with his brother, also a painter.

Belton sued in Morris County Superior Court, which sent the case to arbitration. After the arbitrator found \$170,000 in damages, the parties settled.

Storms contended that Belton must have been at fault because the machine was stored uncocked, O'Connor says.

Storms' lawyer, **John Lamastra** of Warren's **Heim & Lamastra**, did not return a call for comment.

- *By Mary Pat Gallagher*