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DRIVER IDENTIFIED IN FATAL SHOOTING

OFFICERS SAY AKRON MAN, 22, RECENT OHIO PAROLEE, KILLED HIMSELF AFTER CHASE

Author: Ed Meyer, Beacon Journal staff writer

Article Text:

A man found dead from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound following last weekend's police chase on Interstate 77 was identified Monday as Herbert T. Wilkins, 22, of Akron.

Wilkins, who was paroled in April after serving a four-year prison sentence for aggravated robbery, was found slumped in his car early Saturday with a handgun and a large quantity of suspected crack cocaine in his vehicle, police said.

According to police accounts, the chase began about 2:30 a.m. when officers attempted to stop a 1999 Plymouth Neon for a traffic violation at I-77 and Snowville Road in Brecksville.

Officers pursued the driver as he fled south on I-77 and tried to exit at state Route 18 in Copley Township.

Copley police Lt. William Ketler said Wilkins drove onto a grassy strip off the exit ramp and stopped after bumping into the back of a Brecksville cruiser that had blocked the driver's path.

"When the officer got out and opened the door (of the suspect's vehicle), the young man kind of fell out onto the ground with blood on his mouth and nose," Ketler said. "They found a weapon with him and a sizable amount of suspected crack cocaine."

Wilkins had an outstanding Summit County arrest warrant from September on a felony charge of aggravated possession of cocaine, Ketler said.

He said investigators initially had difficulty identifying Wilkins because he did not have an ID in his possession.

Positive identification was made through the suspect's cell phone records and autopsy fingerprints, Ketler said.

Memo:

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