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POLICE

Column: COURT REPORT

MAN CONVICTED IN FATAL DRUNKEN CRASH

THE SUN PRAIRIE MAN PLEADED NO CONTEST TO CHARGES IN THE CRASH THAT
KILLED A MADISON WOMAN.

Author: Ed Treleven Courts reporter

Article Text:

A Sun Prairie man was convicted Thursday of homicide by drunken driving for a fatal crash that occurred March 1 while he was fleeing from police.

Gerald L. Lynch, 30, pleaded no contest Thursday in Dane County Circuit Court to one count of homicide by drunken driving and two counts of causing injury while fleeing police. Under a plea agreement, he would spend no more than 14 years in prison.

Eight other charges against Lynch were dismissed. Two of those charges can be considered by Circuit Judge Steven Ebert when he sentences Lynch in about 60 days after a plea sentence investigation is finished.

Tina L. Brown, 26, of Madison was killed in the crash, which occurred at Buckeye Road and Highway 51. The driver, Christina Forbes, 24, and a passenger, Cornelius Northingham, 42, both of Madison, were injured.

According to a criminal complaint, Lynch was driving with a blood-alcohol concentration of 0.189 percent, nearly twice the state's 0.10 percent limit at the time, when he was spotted driving about 86 mph by a Dane County sheriff's deputy.

Afraid of receiving another drunken driving citation, Lynch led the deputy on a high-speed chase during which he drove through stop signs and red lights, ultimately going through a red light at Highway 51 where the crash occurred, the complaint states.

Lynch remains free on bail pending sentencing.

Man allegedly robbed same restaurant twice

A Madison man charged in February with robbing the Burger King restaurant where he worked had robbed that restaurant before, according to a criminal complaint filed Thursday in Dane County Circuit Court.

Tyrone Thigpen, 25, was charged with armed robbery and possession of a gun by a convicted felon, both as a habitual criminal, for a robbery that occurred on Oct. 17, 2002. As it happens, Thigpen is scheduled for trial next week on charges of robbing the same Burger King on Feb. 20, 2003.

According to the criminal complaint, two employees of the restaurant at 2501 S. Park St. were sitting in a booth on Oct. 17, 2002, when a man they thought was Thigpen walked in carrying a handgun and wearing a stocking over his head and what appeared to be a piece of cardboard over his nose and mouth.

"Come on, come on, you know what I want," Thigpen said several times, the complaint states. One of the women and the restaurant's manager later identified Thigpen from photo lineups. At the time Thigpen allegedly robbed the same restaurant four months later, he was no longer an employee.

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MADISON POLICE DEATH AUTO ACCIDENT ALCOHOL TRAFFIC DANE
COUNTY INVESTIGATION

SHERIFF'S OFFICE REVIEWING FATAL CHASE

BUT THE SHERIFF SAYS A PRELIMINARY LOOK SHOWS THE DEPUTY FOLLOWED
DEPARTMENT POLICY.

Author: Barry Adams Police reporter

Article Text:

The Dane County Sheriff's Office is conducting an administrative review of a chase that ended in the death of a woman early Saturday on Madison's East Side.

But Sheriff Gary Hamblin said Monday a preliminary investigation shows that Deputy Garth P. Blake, 37, a nine-year veteran of the department, took appropriate action.

"I don't see any violation of policy," Hamblin said.

The review will examine written reports of the incident, recordings of radio transmissions and video from Blake's squad car. The review also includes interviews with witnesses. What occurred will also be compared with written policies and procedures, Capt. Brian Willison said. Blake, who conducts field training for other deputies, remains on active duty.

Tina L. Brown, 26, of Madison, died shortly after the Ford Escort, in which she was a passenger, crashed with a GMC Envoy sport utility vehicle at the intersection of Buckeye and Stoughton roads at about 2:13 a.m.

The driver of the SUV, Gerald L. Lynch Jr., 30, of Sun Prairie, allegedly fled from Blake, who had observed the SUV going about 86 mph on Reiner Road. The crash occurred about four minutes later when Lynch, driving west on Buckeye Road, allegedly ran a red light.

Lynch was in the Dane County Jail on Monday and has been tentatively charged with homicide by intoxicated use of a motor vehicle, eluding an officer and causing great bodily harm.

Christina Forbes, 24, the Escort's driver, was in fair condition Monday at UW Hospital. A

passenger, Cornelius Northingham, 42, has been released. Both are from Madison.

According to Sheriff's Office pursuit policies, which are reviewed annually, deputies need to consider the amount of vehicle and pedestrian traffic, weather conditions, road surface and the capabilities of their vehicle.

Brown Deer Police Chief Steven Rinzel, president of the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association, said police can be in no-win situations when it comes to chases.

"Do you leave the intoxicated person on the road or do you try and make the stop?" Rinzel said.

"The individual officer has to make some decisions."

Rarely do police pursuits result in death. In 2000, the most recent year that statistics are available, 1,009 pursuits were reported in the state, with 436 starting in Milwaukee County, followed by Waukesha with 42 and Dane County with 32. Two people, both fleeing motorists, died in 2000.

The average distance of a pursuit was four miles and the average length was about 90 seconds, said Lorelee Brumund, a legislative liaison for the State Patrol.

Saturday's chase is the second in Dane County in about three months to end in a death.

Matthew Hottmann, 22, and Jeremy Budhan, 20, both of Cottage Grove, and Kyle Smith, 19, of Deerfield, were killed after Hottmann fled from Deerfield police on Nov. 30. The chase was terminated but Hottmann crashed his car into a field.

Passenger Mary Reinhart, 17, of Deerfield, the only one in Hottmann's Honda Civic wearing a seat belt, survived the town of Sun Prairie crash.

No wrongdoing by police was found. Hottmann had a blood-alcohol level of 0.17 percent.

Caption:

Photo of Tina Brown

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