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Suspect dies after shock

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Article Text:

A suspected drug dealer died while being arrested Monday after he was shocked with a Taser by Glynn County police.

Christopher Knight, 35, of Brunswick, who was slated to be arrested Tuesday by the Glynn-Brunswick Narcotics Enforcement Team for allegedly selling cocaine, was detained by police Monday night after allegedly ramming a car in traffic on Community Road.

Undercover Glynn County police investigators were surveilling the area Monday at 11:40 p.m. when they saw Knight in his GMC Sierra pickup truck ram a silver-colored Oldsmobile, Glynn County Police Chief Matt Doering said Tuesday.

The detectives initiated a traffic stop. Several patrol officers responded to the scene where Knight was stopped on Whitlock Street.

Knight was allegedly under the influence of alcohol and was uncooperative with police, Doering said.

While detectives were investigating the truck, Knight refused to get in the rear of the patrol car. He was warned that he would be shocked with a Taser if he didn't comply with police, Doering said. Police use Tasers, which deliver an electric shock, to subdue aggressive and uncooperative suspects.

Knight complied but began kicking the rear doors and windows of the patrol car.

To prevent Knight from hurting himself or others, Doering said one of the officers, who has not been identified, deployed his Taser and used one five-second cycle to subdue Knight, Doering said.

After being shocked, Knight rolled over and a piece of what police suspect was crack cocaine allegedly fell out of his mouth, Doering said.

When officers noticed Knight had stopped breathing, they started Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation. All officers are trained in CPR technique.

Knight was taken to the Brunswick hospital at the Southeast Georgia Health System, where he was pronounced dead.

The driver of the Oldsmobile did not stop when police pulled Knight over Monday, but Doering said detectives found him Tuesday.

Detectives found the damaged car parked at a residence and knocked on the door, Doering said.

The man, who was not identified, told police he didn't know Knight and didn't know why Knight was attacking him. He said Knight rammed his car three separate times.

Doering said the cause of death hasn't been determined.

An autopsy was performed Tuesday at the Georgia Bureau of Investigation Crime Lab in Savannah, but results were not available Tuesday afternoon.

"I suspect it's going to be a drug overdose," Doering said as cause of death.

Toxicology analysis takes a great deal of time, but he said the autopsy results may yield some clues.

"Hopefully the preliminary autopsy will tell us something," Doering said. "If he swallowed a bunch of drugs there may be other physiological signs that will (indicate a cause of death)." The officer who deployed his Taser was not placed under administrative leave, but he has requested time off, Doering said.

"I did not put him under any suspension. I wanted to make sure the officer's actions were in line with procedure, and preliminarily (indications are) they were," he said. "I can appreciate the threat, especially when the person is potentially on drugs. I've been there."

Doering said he always regrets loss of life.

"It's very unfortunate and sad, but it's one of these things you can't foresee," he said.

According to Glynn County Sheriff's Office records, Knight had been arrested 20 times since 1994.

Glynn County Superior Court records show Knight has been convicted of seven felonies since 1992, including aggravated assault, possession of cocaine with intent to distribute, sale of cocaine and terroristic threats.

Court records also indicate Knight was still serving a felony probation sentence for aggravated assault charges dating to 2006.

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