

Lebanon Democrat, The (TN)
November 17, 2008
Section: Sports

Local man dies from wreck after high speed chase

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Article Text:

November 15, 2008 â€” A Lebanon man was killed in a motorcycle accident Thursday night after evading Lebanon Police officers and fleeing from Wilson County Sheriff's officers. Eric Cason, 42, of Springhill Circle in Lebanon, died after he failed to negotiate a curve at the intersection of Hartsville Pike and Beasley's Bend Road and crashed.

Tennessee Highway Patrol spokesman Mike Browning said Cason wrecked his 1995 Suzuki GX7 around 7:32 p.m. Thursday night.

"He was headed north-bound on Highway 141 at a high rate of speed and failed to negotiate a curve, running off the left-hand shoulder of the curve where the vehicle came to rest," Browning said, noting that Cason was already dead when medics arrived.

At the time of the crash, a WCSO deputy was pursuing Cason after receiving word that LPD had lost sight of him after he'd hit another vehicle.

Lebanon Public Safety Commissioner Billy Weeks said Cason's pursuit began when an officer in Upton Heights noticed Cason driving "crazy" and tried to initiate a traffic stop.

"[The officer] stuck his arm out the window and the motorcycle sped off and almost hit him.

[Cason] got onto Lake Street going towards Forrest Avenue. The officer turned around, pursued after the motorcycle but once he got to Hartsville Pike, about a quarter mile from where he started, he had no sight of the motorcycle," Weeks said.

Another LPD detective was already on Hartsville Pike and saw Cason coming, "head-on toward him, passing cars going northbound in the southbound lane," he said.

"The detective turned on his emergency equipment and just sat in the middle of the road. In his report, he puts that he was in fear that the motorcycle was going to hit him."

Officer reports and in-car cameras verified that Cason then struck a red passenger vehicle before speeding away.

"The motorcycle, in an attempt to avoid all the vehicles, struck a vehicle on Hartsville Pike, our detective was a witness to that.

"He said glass shattered when the motorcycle struck the car, he lost control of the motorcycle, regained control and continued on," Weeks said.

The driver of the red passenger vehicle was not injured, but LPD lost site of Cason at this time.

A WCSO deputy responded to Hartsville Pike in reference to Cason and observed the motorcycle closing on the rear of his patrol unit at a high rate of speed.

According to the WCSO report, the deputy observed two other vehicles between himself and Cason and pulled to the right shoulder as a precaution.

After the three vehicles passed and Cason passed the other two vehicles, the deputy began pursuit with both audio and visual warning equipment.

"I proceeded to follow the suspect vehicle as it continued to flee recklessly with no regard for the public's safety," stated the report.

"I advised dispatch that my approximate speed was 80-85 miles per hour ... the suspect vehicle continued to flee, progressively pulling away from my unit at an extremely fast-pace."

According to the report, Cason continued to drive in both lanes and got so far out ahead of the deputy he could only maintain a visual on the rear tail light.

"At approximately the 6000 block of Hartsville Pike I notified dispatch that the suspect vehicle had lost control and crashed," stated the report.

The deputy approached Cason and attempted to communicate, and getting no response, requested Wilson County Emergency Management Agency's ambulatory services.

Browning said the THP's Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) investigated the crash but did not note whether or not Cason had been wearing a helmet.

"They go out and recreate the scene and do measurements to determine a speed and any other factors that were involved," he said.

"Alcohol is not suspected, but a test is requested as a routine. The posted speed was 45 mph in that location."

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