

Fleeing suspects run into FOP ball tournament; are detained

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A couple of suspects fleeing by car from Austin police officers and Scott County deputies ran out of luck quickly on Saturday, August 29, in Austin.

When the chase ended at Austin Community Park, the pair found themselves surrounded by baseball bat-wielding members of the Amick-Baker-Kellems Chapter 156, Fraternal Order of Police. Unbeknownst to the pair, FOP members were hosting a softball tournament at the park.

Taken into custody at the park were the driver, Gregory P. Dilger, 33, Scottsburg, and Stephen R. Perry, 33, Austin, his passenger.

From Deputy Joe Guarneri's case report, the officer had been in phone contact with Austin Lt. Shawn Hurt just before 5:30 p.m., who reported to Guarneri that his personal vehicle had nearly been hit head-on by a blue Buick driving southbound on Third Street. Deputy Guarneri soon found the car being driven down the middle of Third St.

At Third and Broadway Streets, the officer said the Buick took the corner and then sped off east on Broadway. That street ends at Community Park, where the FOP tournament was occurring. Deputy Guarneri followed the car, witnessing when the car allegedly passed several vehicles and disregarded stop signs. The vehicle was also seen nearly striking a couple of children on bicycles near the parking lot.

The Buick stopped in the parking lot, the deputy related. As the pair got out of the car, he said he saw several officers he knew that had been involved in the tournament approaching them.

Those officers detained the suspects until the deputy arrived.

Purportedly, both Dilger and Perry said they had been drinking. Empty beer cans were found in the car, and Dilger reportedly said he had had a pint of whiskey.

Officers involved in the arrest included Deputy Jeremy Arnold, Deputy Don Campbell and Sgt. Joe Nicholson of the Scottsburg Police Department.

Dilger and Perry both appeared in Scott Superior Court. Dilger's charges include two counts of operating a vehicle while intoxicated (OVI), both of which were misdemeanors, a Class D felony count of fleeing law enforcement and reckless driving, a Class B misdemeanor. Dilger has a Scottsburg address but resides in Washington County.

Perry is charged with resisting law enforcement, a Class A misdemeanor, as well as public intoxication, a Class B misdemeanor.

After hearing both men's not guilty pleas on Monday, August 31, Judge Nicholas South set each man's jury trial for December 21 and appointed a public defender for Perry. Bail for Dilger was set at \$15,000 corporate surety or 10% cash, while bail for Perry was set at \$10,000/10%.

Dilger posted bond after his initial court hearing.