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Driver hits, kills bicyclist, police say

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Staff writer

After celebrating his wedding all day Sunday, a Newark man allegedly got behind the wheel of his new wife's vehicle and struck and killed a Palmyra teenager riding his bicycle.

Anibal Fontanez, 36, was driving westbound on Hogback Road in the town of Palmyra when he allegedly hit the back of Matthew J. Bray's bicycle, said State Police Capt. Scott Crosier. Bray, 17, of Palmyra, was transported to Newark Wayne Community Hospital but was pronounced dead on arrival.

Fontanez, who has at least two prior DWI convictions and did not have a valid driver's license, fled the scene of the accident, Crosier said. However, the vehicle's license plate was left behind at the scene and police were able to track down the car.

"When he showed back up to the house, the family informed him (that he was being sought by police) and told him he had to turn himself in," Crosier said, adding that one of Fontanez's relatives drove him to the Newark Police Department, where he turned himself in. Fontanez got married sometime during the weekend and attended a party to celebrate the wedding on Sunday, Crosier said.

With a blood alcohol content of 0.16 percent — double the legal limit — Fontanez was arrested and charged with four felony-level charges: driving while intoxicated; aggravated unlicensed operation; first-degree vehicular manslaughter; and leaving the scene of a fatal motor vehicle accident. Fontanez was arraigned in Palmyra Town Court Monday and was remanded to the Wayne County Jail without bail. His preliminary hearing is scheduled for today.

Other charges are pending the completion of the investigation. Crosier said it has not been determined how fast Fontanez was traveling in the Dodge Stratus, which was registered to his mother-in-law.

If Fontanez is convicted of first-degree vehicular manslaughter, he could face a maximum sentence of five to 15 years in prison, said Wayne County District Attorney Richard Healy.

Bray, who attended three different schools in the last few years, was described by several school officials as a "likable kid," who was on the quiet side. Bray attended Marion Junior/Senior High School from 2004 until March 2007, when his family moved to Palmyra, said Marion Superintendent Kathryn Wegman, who met Bray when she was acting principal of the high school a few years ago.

Bray then attended Palmyra-Macedon Senior High School for several months before leaving for Wayne Technical and Career Center in Williamson, where he was enrolled in the Metal Trades: Motorsport Fabrication program and worked on completing his GED from October through November 2007.

"He was a good kid and worked well," said one of his instructors, Jim Claypool. He added that Bray was more focused on welding and really enjoyed it. Claypool said Bray dropped out in November.

One of Bray's relatives, Cheryl Bray of Macedon, said he was deciding between going into the auto-mechanics field or enrolling in the military and following in the footsteps of his father, who was a Marine.

"He loved everything outdoors— hunting, fishing, skateboarding," Cheryl Bray said. "He was always out and about."

And although he had his "wild ways" sometimes, his aunt said, Matt Bray always made time for his family, which includes two brothers and one sister.

"When it came to his friends and family, he was very caring," she said.

The last fatal accident in which DWI was a contributing factor in Wayne County that State Police investigated was in 2005. That year State Police responded to three separate DWI fatal accidents, according to State Police statistics.

Monroe County State Police responded to one DWI fatal accident in 2007 and another in 2006. The agency also investigated three separate DWI fatal accidents in 2005. There have been no DWI fatal accidents this year in State Police's Monroe County jurisdictions.

Calling hours for Matt Bray will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday at Willard H. Scott Funeral Home, 12 South Ave., in Webster. Funeral services also will be held there at 2 p.m. Thursday.

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