



DWI Suspect Thinks He Can Escape Bike Officer

He thought wrong.

by Paul Conner, PCI #627

Maryland

On a fall Monday morning I was on the bike, patrolling my post, when I received a radio call from an off-duty officer, asking me to meet him in front of the District Court Building. The officer had been in court with a suspect whom he had arrested for DWI several months earlier. The judge had thrown the suspect out of the courtroom because he came to court drunk. The officer explained that he thought the suspect would drive away drunk, and showed me the suspect's vehicle, which was parked about a block away from the courthouse.

The officer said he had called me because he knew that, because I am on a bike, I could keep an eye on the suspect's vehicle without being seen. I agreed, and told him I would take care of it. I rode across the street and about 50 feet down the sidewalk, stopping and crouching down on my top tube to observe the suspect's vehicle through the windows of a parked car. It was perfect concealment, yet I could watch his vehicle clearly.

Sure enough, after about 30 minutes, I saw the suspect stumbling across the field from the courthouse, heading directly towards his vehicle. At that point, I called for a marked car to be in the area for a traffic stop, but I informed the officer to stay a street or two away until I had a sense of the suspect's intentions.

What I saw next amazed me. The suspect entered the car, pulled out a bottle of vodka, and began drinking. I was close enough to hear if the car started and was ready to move in before he could take off, but he didn't start the car right away. Twenty minutes passed, and he continued to just drink and smoke.

I had two options: arrest him for drinking on a county street, which carries a minor penalty, or wait until he started the car and charge him with DWI, which holds a much stiffer penalty. I thought to myself, "This guy needs to be in jail, so I'll wait him out a little longer." After 30 minutes of patiently waiting, the marked car was called away on a priority call.

As luck would have it, minutes after the marked car was called away, I heard it. The suspect started the car and floored it before I could make my approach. He made a quick turn onto a main road with me following him and calling out on the radio. After making the turn, the suspect got only 20 feet before being caught up in traffic.

I rode up to the rear of the driver's side door, giving myself room to safely get out of the way in case things went bad. I stated, "Police, turn the car off." He looked back at me as I again ordered him to turn off the car. The suspect then slurred "F*** it," and took off into the opposite lane of traffic, making another quick turn onto a side street, with me in hot pursuit.

As I again got onto the radio to report my pursuit of a DWI suspect, my voice was elevated from trying to both talk and pedal as fast as I could. The shift commander heard the agitation in my voice, and, thinking I must be traveling at breakneck speeds in a car to keep up with the suspect, jumped in and told me to "break off the pursuit." Before I could respond, my sergeant interjected, "uh, sir? He's on a bike."



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As the suspect reached the end of the side street, he turned into an alley, striking a curb. He bailed out and was able to get about five feet from the car before I performed a rolling dismount to a run, tackled him, and placed him under arrest.

The shift commander and other units arrived to my location and were all laughing that a bike cop caught a DWI suspect as they helped with the tow and the prisoner transport.

When the case came to trial, the suspect was still being held on bail, so this time, he wasn't drunk. He pled guilty, had his license revoked, and was given a two-year jail sentence.

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