



Get Ready to React

Being ready can save your life

by Art Kleist, PCI #1096

Milwaukee (WI) Police Department

The City of Milwaukee is known as “A Great Place on a Great Lake,” but just like in any major metropolitan city, bad things can happen. Two such things occurred on Monday, July 13, of this year (talk about Mondays being the worst day of the week!). In two separate incidents, Milwaukee Police bicycle officers, while conducting vehicle contacts of suspicious vehicles/occupants, were injured by those subjects.

At 4:56 pm., in a medium-to-high crime area, Officer Vidmar was on patrol with his partner when he backed up another bicycle patrol officer at a vehicle stop. The vehicle, a four-door maroon Hyundai occupied by two male subjects, was stopped in the middle of the street. Officer Vidmar was approaching the auto from the rear passenger side, acting as a cover officer.

As he got within twenty feet of the car, the driver observed the uniformed officers approaching, put the car in reverse and hit the gas. Officer Vidmar stated that the car veered toward him and he did not have enough time to escape the collision. Vidmar knew his chance of surviving the impact would be better if he went over the trunk as opposed to under the car, so like Superman, he vaulted over the rear of the auto. As the vehicle fled, his bicycle was trapped underneath and dragged hundreds of feet.

Officer Vidmar sustained minor lacerations, bruising, and pain. Despite his injuries, he managed to get up and chase the auto on foot. Follow up investigation resulted in the auto being located and the suspect apprehended at his home. Felony charges of Recklessly Endangering Safety were issued by our district attorney’s office. Officer Vidmar recovered from his injuries and is again patrolling, on his new police bicycle.

The second incident occurred at 5:34 pm, in an area known for illegal drug trade. Officer Ozellie approached a vehicle, a red four-door Cadillac occupied by a known drug dealer. Ozellie approached the auto from the passenger side, attempting to monitor the subject’s actions inside the vehicle.

The subject, upon observing the uniformed officers approaching his vehicle, sped off, running over one of Ozellie’s feet in the process. The impact spun Officer Ozellie around, and he was then side-swiped by the vehicle.

In this instance as well, the vehicle was located and confiscated; however, the suspect is still on the run. The district attorney’s office issued a full extraditable felony warrant for Recklessly Endangering Safety. Current intelligence has the suspect somewhere in California.

Fortunately, the injuries sustained by both officers were minimal and both are back to work.

Officer Art Kleist has served with the Milwaukee Police Department for 20 years and currently serves with the Neighborhood Task Force, the Marine Operations Unit and Harbor Patrol. A bike officer during off-season for the boats, he has been instructing Milwaukee PD bicyclists for the past nine years. He can be reached at akleis@milwaukee.gov.

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