

## **NEWS RELEASE**

September 3, 2019

For immediate release

### **MANSLAUGHTER INDICTMENT RETURNED IN BOATING CRASH**

The Lauderdale County Grand Jury has returned an indictment against Ross Newton Wooten III, also known as Trey Wooten (w/m; DOB: 4-18-86)) for two counts of Manslaughter for recklessly causing the deaths of Lauren Cowart and her five-year-old daughter, Blakely in a boating crash. The crash occurred at approximately 10:30 p.m. on June 8<sup>th</sup> in Shoals Creek near the mouth of the Tennessee River

The Indictment states that Wooten was "under the influence" at the time of the crash. (Copy of indictment attached)

A Toxicological Analysis Report from the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences attached to the indictment indicates that Wooten had a blood alcohol content of .121. This amount is above the legal limit of .08.

Wooten's bond has been set at \$50,000. It is expected that he will turn himself in by 5:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The primary focus of the investigation up to this point has been on determining who was at fault in causing the deaths of two precious people. The Grand Jury Indictment has answered that question with the indictment of Wooten.

A secondary issue concerns the actions of the other boat driver, Mark McBryer after the crash occurred. The investigation into this issue remains pending and will be further considered by the grand jury later this month.

Facts: The crash investigation, led by Marine Police Investigator Chad Dyer, reveals the following:

Wooten was the driver of a ski boat occupied by himself and his four-year-old son along with Lauren Cowart and her five-year-old daughter. Wooten's son was sitting in his lap in the driver's seat of the boat; Lauren and her daughter were seated in the passenger seat of the boat.

Wooten was driving from the Emerald Beach area of Shoal Creek towards the Tennessee River with an intended destination of his mother's residence in Colbert County. The crash occurred near the area of "Robbins Island" when Wooten crashed his boat into the front of a thirty (30) foot cabin cruiser driven by Mark McBryer and occupied by McBryer's wife and her sister as well as McBryer's adult son and his friend.

The McBryer's were returning from an outing on the water that included them traveling from Marina Mar where they have their boat docked, thru the locks at Wilson Dam to McFarland Park and back. They were traveling at approximately 6 miles per hour at the time of the crash. Wooten's speed at the time of the crash is estimated at 20 to 25 miles per hour.

After the crash, McBryer drove the boat from the crash site to Marina Mar. On the way to the marina, individuals on his boat called 911.

Wooten's boat sustained heavy damage, primarily on the passenger side of the boat. No one from either boat was thrown into the water. Lauren and her daughter died on the boat from multiple blunt force trauma. Wooten was seriously injured in the crash. He and his son remained on the boat and yelled for help.

Wooten and his son were rescued by three young fishermen, who were fishing in the area and heard their cries for help.

McBryer and the occupants of his boat remained at the marina and were interviewed by Investigator Dyer.

The grand jury will now further review McBryer's actions after the crash to determine whether his actions warrant a charge of Leaving the Scene of an Accident.

Released by:

Lauderdale County District Attorney Chris Connolly

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DEPARTMENT OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

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TOXICOLOGICAL ANALYSIS REPORT

Chad Dyer  
DPS - Highway Patrol - Sheffield Post  
4500 Hatch Blvd.  
Sheffield, AL 35660

ADFS Case Number 19BH12515  
Agency Case Number  
Case Date 06/14/2019  
Date Completed 08/05/2019  
Report ID 120192559

Suspect Wooten, III, Ross Newton

Evidence received (including subitems)

Item	Specimen	Received From	Agency	Date
1	Toxicology specimen(s)	Chad Dyer	DPS - Highway Patrol - Sheffield Post	06/14/2019
1A	Blood	Chad Dyer	DPS - Highway Patrol - Sheffield Post	06/14/2019
1B	Blood	Chad Dyer	DPS - Highway Patrol - Sheffield Post	06/14/2019
1C	Blood	Chad Dyer	DPS - Highway Patrol - Sheffield Post	06/14/2019
1D	Blood	Chad Dyer	DPS - Highway Patrol - Sheffield Post	06/14/2019
1E	Urine	Chad Dyer	DPS - Highway Patrol - Sheffield Post	06/14/2019

Evidence analyzed (Including sub-items)

Item	Specimen	Analyte	Result	Method(s)	Notes
1A	Blood	Ethanol	0.121 g/100 mL	HS/GC, HS/GC/MS	
<i>0.121 g/100 mL ± 0.005 g/100 mL at a coverage probability of 99.73%</i>					
1A-1B	Blood	Buprenorphine	U	EIA, LC/MS/MS	
1A-1B	Blood	Norbuprenorphine	1.5 ng/mL	EIA, LC/MS/MS	
1C-1D	Blood		NA		
1E	Urine	Ethanol	0.149 g/100 mL	HS/GC	
<i>0.149 g/100 mL ± 0.007 g/100 mL at a coverage probability of 99.73%</i>					

Footnotes

NA - Not analyzed/Not applicable  
U - Analysis was unsuccessful

STATE'S  
EXHIBIT

A



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2003-Present

Customer Satisfaction  
Surveys are available at  
[www.adfs.alabama.gov](http://www.adfs.alabama.gov)

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Comments

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Evidence was received in a sealed biological specimens kit.

Items 1A-1D labeled, in part, "...Wooten, Trey 2359..."

Item 1E labeled, in part, "...Wooten, Trey..."

SCOPE OF DRUG ANALYSIS IS LIMITED TO THE FOLLOWING:

Amphetamine class, barbiturate class, benzodiazepine class, buprenorphine, cannabinoids, carisoprodol/meprobamate, cocaine and/ or metabolite(s), cyclobenzaprine, dextromethorphan, fentanyl, methadone, opiate class, tramadol, tricyclic antidepressants, zolpidem

*Remaining evidence will be disposed 24 months from the date of this report unless storage space becomes limited or alternate arrangements are made prior thereto.*



08/02/2019

Michael L. Weaver  
Forensic Scientist

# INDICTMENT

STATE OF ALABAMA  
LAUDERDALE COUNTY

CIRCUIT COURT

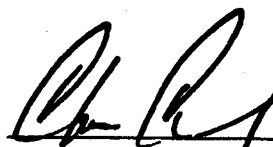
Term, August 2019

## COUNT I (Manslaughter)

The Grand Jury of said County charge, before the finding of this indictment, Ross Newton Wooten III a/k/a "Trey" Wooten, whose name is otherwise unknown to the Grand Jury, did recklessly cause the death of Lauren Cowart by crashing a boat he was driving into another boat while the said Ross Newton Wooten III a/k/a "Trey" Wooten was under the influence (See Toxicological Analysis Report of Ross Newton Wooten III a/k/a "Trey" Wooten (ADFS Case# 19BH12515) attached hereto as Exhibit A), in violation of Section 13A-6-3 of the Code of Alabama, against the peace and dignity of the State of Alabama.

## COUNT II (Manslaughter)

The Grand Jury of said County charge, before the finding of this indictment, Ross Newton Wooten III a/k/a "Trey" Wooten, whose name is otherwise unknown to the Grand Jury, did recklessly cause the death of Blakely Cowart by crashing a boat he was driving into another boat while the said Ross Newton Wooten III a/k/a "Trey" Wooten was under the influence (See Toxicological Analysis Report of Ross Newton Wooten III a/k/a "Trey" Wooten (ADFS Case# 19BH12515) attached hereto as Exhibit A), in violation of Section 13A-6-3 of the Code of Alabama, against the peace and dignity of the State of Alabama.



Chris Connolly  
District Attorney — Eleventh Judicial Circuit