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KENTON TEEN

Prankster to serve 120 days detention

By Holly Zachariah

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KENTON, Ohio — The last teenager to be sentenced for his role in a prank that seriously injured two other teenagers will spend twice as long in juvenile detention as the friends who helped him set it up.

Judge Gary McKinley had already sentenced four of Corey Manns' friends, all Kenton High School student-athletes who helped Manns steal a fake deer last year. They put it in the middle of a Hardin County road, causing a crash. McKinley sentenced each to 60 days in juvenile detention.

But Manns' case was heard by a different judge because McKinley knew the boy's family.

And yesterday, visiting Judge Damian J. Vercillo told Manns, who is 16, that this was much more than a prank.

"It was a well thought-out plan, and it took some effort," he said. "At any step along the way, you could have stopped it. But you didn't."

Vercillo then said Manns would serve 90 days in juvenile detention for the part he played. He also tacked on another 30 days for a contempt of court violation.

In late October, Manns was seen at the Kenton High School baseball field dugout with another one of the defendants in the case and a group of girls. That was a violation of his court-ordered house arrest and of orders not to have contact with the other teens in the case.

Manns was suspended from school for whatever the group was doing at the dugout — the court did not say what that was — and that suspension meant he violated court orders to follow school rules.

This case began more than a year ago, Nov. 18, 2005, when the five boys stole a fake deer, painted it with obscenities and put it in the middle of a rural road to see what approaching cars would do. They all pleaded no contest to charges of vehicular vandalism, petty theft and possession of criminal tools, and Manns will now join his friends at the Logan County Juvenile Detention Center.

Two other teenagers in the car that night, whom prosecutors say did not steal the deer, paint it or put it in the road, pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charges of failing to report a felony and were fined.

The crash happened when 18-year-old Robert "Bobby" Roby swerved to avoid the deer. Roby and his passenger, 17-year-old Dustin Zachariah, were seriously injured.

The sentencing of Manns yesterday effectively ends the criminal cases, but the civil cases are just beginning.

Zachariah filed a lawsuit yesterday against all seven boys in the car that night, and against Roby,

his friend who was driving the car. Roby has also filed a lawsuit against all seven boys, their parents and Chrysler, alleging his vehicle's seat belts failed.

Manns' attorney argued yesterday that his client didn't intend for anyone to get hurt.

Vercillo didn't buy it.

"Detention centers, jail and prisons are full of people who say they didn't mean for something to happen," he said. "It was dark, and that deer was hard to see. So it's no great stretch to foresee that when a car swerves, it might wreck and that when it wrecks, someone might get hurt."

Manns sat with his head down during the entire hearing and picked at chipped pieces of wood on the underside of the table in front of him.

Unlike his four friends, he did not apologize to his victims in court. He said nothing on his own behalf.

hzachariah@dispatch.com

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