Hernando chase ends with deputies killing armed - Citrus County Chronicle (Crystal River, FL) - February 17, 2018

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Citrus County Sheriff's Office deputies killed an armed man Saturday evening after a high-speed chase through Hernando that ended when the man drove into a shopping plaza and rammed a deputy's vehicle, authorities said.

A deputy who was outside his vehicle when the suspect's vehicle slammed into the parking lot was hospitalized with non-life-threatening injuries sustained in the crash, sheriff's spokeswoman Lindsay Blair said.

The suspect, 28-year-old **Ryan Batchelder** of Hernando, was pronounced dead on the scene, she said.

The incident started when someone called 911 at about 5 p.m. to report a man was making threats to shoot someone at the Xtreme Games 3 at the U.S. 41/State Road 200 apex. The caller gave dispatchers a description of his vehicle: a blue Kia Sedona.

Deputies spotted the vehicle in Hernando and began pursuit north on State Road 200. Blair said the pursuit was called off because of the suspect's excessive speed.

The sheriff's office alerted the Marion County Sheriff's Office and Citrus deputies stayed in the Hernando vicinity, Blair said.

A short time later, deputies found Batchelder speeding south on County Road 491, and then southbound on U.S. 41 back toward Hernando. Batchelder passed the Xtreme game store and pointed a firearm at deputies, Blair said.

Several attempts to stop the vehicle, including using stop strips along the road, were unsuccessful, she said.

Batchelder ran the red light at the U.S. 41 apex with S.R. 200, entering the Hernando Plaza parking lot at a high rate of speed, she said.

He slammed his vehicle into a sheriff's patrol car, which in turn pushed the patrol car into three other parked vehicles.

Deputies fired upon Batchelder's vehicle, Blair said. They were able to get him out of the Kia but he died a short time later, she said.

Asked if Batchelder fired at the deputies, Blair said she could not say because the matter had been turned over to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for investigation.

Will Welch, manager of the nearby Burger Station on U.S. 41, said customers who were out on the restaurant's patio rushed inside after seeing deputies armed with rifles running by.

Welch said he brought in the customers and locked the doors. He said he went out back to make sure there were no customers in the parking lot when he saw the Kia speeding by and into the parking lot, colliding with the deputy's car.

Welch said he then heard three shots.

"I heard three distinct pistol pops," he said.

He said those shots were immediately followed by a barrage of gunfire from sheriff's deputies.

"It was bedlam for seven or eight minutes," Welch said.

He said after hearing pistol shots, he came back into the restaurant and ordered everyone to the floor, away from the windows. He said he told customers and his four employees that there was shooting occurring outside.

"I told everyone to get down," he said.

The shooting closed a portion of U.S. 41 for several hours Saturday night.

This is the second shooting involving a sheriff's deputy in pursuit in four days. On Thursday, a deputy shot and injured a man following a pursuit in Homosassa when the suspect tried to ram his vehicle and run him over, authorities said. That man is facing an attempted-murder charge.

Sheriff Mike Prendergast said in a statement late Saturday night: "This is a very tragic turn of events, where a man lost his life. We are very thankful that our officers were not seriously injured and that the many citizens who were very close to this extremely dangerous situation did not suffer from catastrophic injuries."

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Editor's note: This story has been updated to correct the suspect's first name.