

Driver leads police on 52-mile chase at 130 mph

by Cheryl McDermott

A California man driving a stolen car was arrested Wednesday afternoon following a 52-mile police chase at speeds over 130 miles per hour (mph) on Interstate 84 in the Columbia Gorge, Oregon State Police (OSP) reported.

A multi-agency enhanced patrol was actively working in the area, and the increased presence of state, county, and local officers aided in the suspect's safe apprehension.

Officers chased a stolen car over 52 miles at speeds in excess of 130 mph - OSP photo (Inset: Michael Jon Coman's NOCF photo)

Sherman County Sheriff Brad Lohrey clocked the driver, Michael Jon Coman, 33, of Auburn, California, speeding at 90 mph as he was traveling northbound on Highway 97, north of Moro about 2 p.m. Coman quickly accelerated the 1992 Dodge Stealth and sped away.

An OSP trooper was working the same highway, north of the suspect's location. He obtained a radar reading of 123 mph and moved into position to follow.

OSP attempted to spike the vehicle's tires, deploying the spike strips at Biggs Junction, troopers reported. Coman, however, avoided the spikes and fled west on Interstate 84. Troopers kept the vehicle in sight, even at speeds in excess of 130 mph.

Three more attempts to spike the car's tires on Interstate 84 in The Dalles-area failed. As the Dodge exited I-84 at Mosier near milepost 69, troopers and Hood River County Sheriff's deputies successfully manage to spike two tires.

Coman, however, with the vehicle hobbled with two spiked tires, drove back on I-84 eastbound, and traveled three more miles before coming to a stop at milepost 72.

The suspect was taken into custody without further incident about 2:30 p.m. and is lodged in the Northern Oregon Correctional Facility in The Dalles, troopers said. He is charged with unauthorized use of a motor vehicle, possession of a stolen vehicle, reckless driving, and felony attempt to elude in a vehicle. Bail was set at \$45,000.

Police said the Dodge Stealth was reported stolen from Auburn, California six days ago. OSP Lieutenant Pat Ashmore credited the fact that the interagency enhanced patrol was coincidentally happening at the time of the incident, putting numerous OSP troopers and other officers on the area highways to quickly get in position to stop the suspect. "If the extra troopers and other officers were not working this enhanced patrol project, we would probably not have had the personnel in position to stop the car and arrest its driver," said Lieutenant Ashmore.

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