High-speed pursuit leads to Prineville manâ€™s arrest

by Cheryl McDermott

A 25-year old Prineville driver wanted only for speeding and outstanding misdemeanor warrants for failing to appear in court led Oregon State Police (OSP) on a 20 minute chase at speeds exceeding 120-mph Wednesday before he eventually was apprehended after his tires were spiked.

About 9:50 a.m., April 25, OSP Senior Trooper Ryan Niehus was patrolling in a construction work zone on Highway 97 about seven miles north of Klamath Falls when he attempted to stop a 2004 Dodge pickup speeding by at 80 mph in a 55 mph zone, troopers reported.

Lucas Thomas Bechtel (inset) led troopers on a high speed chase even after officers spiked his tire and his vehicle was traveling only on a wheel rim - OSP photos In response to the patrol carâ€™s emergency lights, the driver, 25-year old Lucas Thomas Bechtel of Prineville, pulled onto the shoulder and slowed, then sped off southbound at speeds exceeding 120 mph.

Troopers said they deployed spike strips near milepost 269, and the pickupâ€™s right front tire was shredded and eventually came off the rim.

Addition troopers, Klamath County Sheriffâ€™s deputies, and Klamath Falls Police officers chased Bechtelâ€™s vehicle as he continued south, exited in Klamath Falls to Highway 140, and headed west out of the city. Continuing on for another 15 miles, Bechtel eventually pulled over near milepost 55 and surrendered.

Bechtel was taken into custody and lodged in the Klamath County Jail. He is charged with attempting to elude in a vehicle (a felony), reckless driving, five counts of recklessly endangering another person, three counts of criminal mischief (related to damage to area highways caused by driving on the wheel rim), and driving with a suspended license, three failure to appear warrants from Crook County (misdemeanors). For allegedly trying to swallow less than one ounce of marijuana, Bechetel is also charged with tampering with evidence.

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