

Oregon driver facing drunk-driving, other charges after crash that killed softball coach, player

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"These individuals were cherished members of our campus -- an exceptional student-athlete and a passionate and talented coach. Our entire community is grieving this tragic loss," the college president wrote. Umpqua Community College

By Tatum Todd | The Oregonian/OregonLive

The driver of the car that slammed into a softball team's bus on Friday — killing two and injuring eight — is now facing felony charges, including manslaughter, Oregon State Police said.

Johnathan James Dowdy, 32, of Coos Bay, is charged with first-degree manslaughter, second- and third-degree assault, reckless endangerment, reckless driving, driving with a suspended license and DUI, court records show.

The Umpqua Community College softball team bus was headed back to Roseburg after a game in North Bend at the time of the crash, around 10 p.m. on Oregon Route 42 near milepost 23 in Coos County, the Oregon State Police said in a statement. Dowdy was driving west on the highway when his Chevy Silverado crossed into the eastbound lane and hit the softball team's bus head-on, police allege.

The team's coach, 46-year-old Jami Strinz, was driving the bus at the time of the crash and died from her injuries, police said. Softball player Kiley Jones, 19, died at the scene. The eight other people on the bus were hospitalized with "moderate to serious" injuries, police said. Officials did not provide an update on any of the other passengers' conditions.

Dowdy suffered serious injuries, and first responders drove him to a hospital. Police arrested him Monday after he was discharged from the hospital.

Strinz also coached the college's volleyball team. Jones was a first-year student who played first-base on the softball team.

Oregon State Representative Virgle Osborne — who is an Umpqua Community College alumnus — called for a moment of silence for the victims during a House session on Monday.

At the time of the crash, Dowdy was already facing a drunk-driving charge, stemming from an arrest Jan. 19, court records show. On that day, Coos Bay police were on the lookout for him based on a 2024 warrant for poaching elk.

They spotted his lifted 2007 Chevrolet Avalanche pickup truck pull into a Chevron shortly after midnight, according to court records. Officers approached Dowdy to arrest him on the poaching warrant when they noticed he was slurring his speech, had bloodshot eyes and smelled of alcohol. Police found unopened cans of Coors Light in his truck, according to a police report filed in court.

Dowdy was charged in the January drunk driving arrest in March. He pleaded guilty to the poaching charges in April 17. His next court date on the drunk driving case had been scheduled for May 2.

Fedor Zarkhin contributed to this report.

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