

Suspect to undergo psych evaluation: Alleged driver in WSU pedestrian strikes makes first court appearance

By Sarah Mason, Daily News staff writer

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Daniel Noble will spend much of the day with a psychologist from Palouse River Consulting, who is analyzing whether he is safe to be released into the public after he was arrested Monday morning for allegedly hitting two students with his car at Washington State University.

Whitman County Superior Court Judge David Frazier ordered Noble to undergo the analysis during his initial hearing Tuesday afternoon. According to law, the court must release Noble 24 hours after Tuesday's hearing unless there is sufficient evidence to believe he will flee before facing trial or commit another illegal act and endanger the public.

The court will make a determination about Noble's temporary release at 2:30 p.m. today.

Formal charges have not yet been filed, but the 31-year-old Moscow resident could face two counts of vehicular assault, two counts of hit-and-run and one count of resisting arrest.

The two victims have been identified as Neil Waldbjorn, 19, from Malage, Wash., and Hogun Hahm, 23, from Pullman, were both listed in satisfactory condition at Pullman Regional Hospital on Tuesday afternoon, hospital spokesman Josh Harman said. The victims were taken to the hospital Monday with what WSU Police Lt. Steve Hansen called non life-threatening injuries.

According to an affidavit of probable cause and a booking sheet, one victim sustained a laceration to the forehead and a broken leg, and the other victim also had a broken leg.

During his hearing Tuesday, Noble's attorney, Mark Moorer of Moscow, said the incident could have been caused by a caffeine-induced psychosis or dementia.

Noble's job as a financial specialist in the University of Idaho's Trust and Investment Office kept him up around the clock, Moorer said, so Noble drank coffee and energy drinks - enough caffeine to potentially cause him to act out of character.

Noble's wife had noticed a change in his character three days before the incident, Moorer said.

Moorer intends to get a private mental analysis of Noble within the next 24 hours to go alongside the one recommended by Frazier.

The incident occurred shortly before 7:30 a.m. Monday, when Noble allegedly struck one pedestrian in a crosswalk in front of Gannon-Goldsworthy Hall. Police claim he continued driving and struck another pedestrian in front of McCoy Hall before coming to a stop about a block and half later.

Police arrested Noble with the aid of witnesses who were still on scene, and found him wandering around in his pajamas.

Hansen said an officer had to deploy a Taser device to subdue Noble, who he described as "very uncooperative."

Hansen said Noble appeared to have swerved onto the sidewalk and struck one of the pedestrians. The Washington State Patrol had received a report earlier in the morning about a similar car driving erratically and headed toward Pullman on the Pullman-Moscow Highway.

Police have impounded Noble's Pontiac Grand Am, but are waiting for a search warrant before processing the vehicle for evidence. An initial blood evaluation showed no sign of debilitating drugs in Noble's body.

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