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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Approved by CJZ
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Jury Returns Guilty Verdicts For Murder and Gross Vehicular Manslaughter in DUI/Street Racing Homicide Case: Kern County Superior Court Case #BF179192A

(Bakersfield) - Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a significant jury verdict in a case arising from an illegal speed contest. On March 17, 2023, in a case prosecuted by Chief Deputy District Attorney Cole McKnight, a Kern County jury found defendant Ronald Pierce, Jr. guilty of Second-Degree Murder, Gross Vehicular Manslaughter While Intoxicated, and Felony DUI charges for the death of an uninvolved motorist. Israel Maldonado, the second defendant in the case, was convicted of Vehicular Manslaughter with Gross Negligence and Reckless Driving but found not guilty of Second-Degree Murder.

On November 24, 2019, defendants Ronald Pierce Jr and Israel Maldonado engaged in a street race on Old River Road between White Lane and Ming Avenue, in Southwest Bakersfield. Pierce drove a red Ford Mustang in a race with Maldonado, who was driving a gray Dodge Ram pickup truck. During the race, Pierce reached speeds exceeding 130 miles per hour before colliding with the victim's vehicle from behind. The collision propelled the victim-vehicle into oncoming traffic, where a utility truck struck the driver's side of the victim's vehicle. The collision killed the driver of the victim vehicle and gravely injured the decedent's two grandchildren, who were also in the vehicle. Officers of the Bakersfield Police Department arrived at the scene and determined that Pierce was under the influence of alcohol and measured Pierce's Blood Alcohol Concentration at 0.24% - three times the legal limit. Maldonado left the scene of the collision but was apprehended only hours later by police.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented on the verdict, stating: "Driving Under the Influence and Illegal Street Racing are two of the deadliest and most dangerous crimes to be committed on our roadways. That Pierce combined two inherently dangerous crimes put everyone in danger, and his complete disregard for the safety of the community has left a trail of death and destruction in his wake. Today's verdict holds both men accountable for their roles in this senseless tragedy, and a proper sentence will protect the public from further harm at their hands."

Sentencing is scheduled before the Honorable Kenneth Twisselman on May 5, 2023 in Department 9 of the Kern County Superior Court. Pierce faces a sentence of at least 15 years to life. Maldonado faces a sentence of up to 7 years 4 months in state prison.

Ronald Pierce, Jr.:



Israel Maldonado:

