

## **WESTLAND: SHOOT-OUT SUSPECTS CHARGED - 4 MEN TO FACE MULTIPLE FELONY COUNTS IN SHOPPING CENTER MELEE**

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Saturday, August 16, 2008

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Four **suspects** arrested in connection with a **shoot-out** during an undercover drug sting by Romulus police at the Merri-Warren Plaza in Westland were arraigned Friday and ordered held on \$1 million bond each.

Three of the **suspects** were arraigned before Magistrate Donald Vandersloot in 18th District Court in Westland. Demond Sanders, 29, and Roberto Reed, 32, both of Detroit, and Joseph Boldizar, 49, of Garden City were **charged** with five felony counts: assault with intent to rob while armed, delivery of 1,000 or more grams of cocaine, possession of 1,000 or more grams of cocaine, conspiracy to possess 1,000 grams of cocaine, and conspiracy to rob.

A fourth **suspect** who was wounded by undercover Romulus police, Benjamin Pringle, 32, of Detroit, was arraigned later in the day at a local hospital where he is in stable condition with a gunshot wound in the lower abdomen. In addition to the same five felony counts as the others, Pringle also is **charged** with four counts of assault with intent to murder, three counts of felonious assault, felon in possession of a firearm and felony firearm.

All face life in prison if convicted.

The fifth **suspect**, Brian Thomas, 28, of Detroit died from multiple gunshot wounds in the **shoot-out** with Romulus police. He was pronounced dead in the parking lot of the strip mall at Warren and Merriman.

Not guilty pleas were entered Friday for Sanders, Reed and Boldizar. The **suspects** are being held in the Wayne County jail, awaiting a preliminary exam scheduled for Aug. 28 in 18th District Court in Westland. Except for Boldizar, all of the **suspects** have prior criminal records and are considered habitual offenders.

Undercover Romulus police agreed to meet the **suspects** at about 3:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Westland strip mall. A reverse sting operation was planned in which the **suspects** were to buy 3 kilos of cocaine valued at \$60,000 from an unnamed police informant.

Police reports indicate Sanders drove Thomas and Boldizar to the plaza to meet with the informant, who brought the drugs to sell to the trio. While Sanders remained in a green Chevy Lumina, Thomas and Boldizar got into the backseat of the informant's silver Mercedes with a black bag police say they believed contained the money to purchase the drugs.

"There was never any money at the scene. This was set up to be a robbery from the get-go," said Lt. Daniel Karrick of the Westland Police detective bureau.

Soon afterward, a black Buick Rendezvous driven by Reed pulled into the parking lot just outside the Bob's Canton-Westland grocery store, police said. Witnesses told police and the Free Press that they saw Pringle emerging from the passenger side and approaching the informant with a semiautomatic weapon in hand.

The informant grabbed the gun barrel as both Pringle and Thomas, who had a gun in the backseat, tried to shoot him, police said.

When police in undercover vans converged from nearby locations, Pringle and Thomas ran toward the grocery store while shooting at police. Thomas was shot, and Pringle entered the store, sending customers and employees fleeing.

Pringle was shot, and Boldizar was arrested shortly afterward. Sanders and Reed fled and police issued an alert for their vehicles.

Although multiple shots were exchanged and the window of one store at the strip mall was shot out, Lt. Karrick said a police investigation has yet to determine the number of shots fired.

None of the officers, bystanders or the informant were injured.

Sanders abandoned the Lumina in Detroit, but was arrested later that night. Reed surrendered to Detroit police late Wednesday night.

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Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS; NEWS

Page: 5A

Index Terms: shooting; drug

Record Number: dfp0000614848

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