

Goodman goes on trial next week for DUI manslaughter

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PALM BEACH COUNTY, Fla. -- Next week Wellington polo club founder John Goodman is scheduled to go to trial on DUI manslaughter charges. The case has drawn national attention, as has Goodman's adoption of his adult girlfriend.

The sheriff's office says he drove drunk at twice the legal limit and sped through a stop sign. Investigators say Goodman hit the car of 23-year-old Scott Wilson, knocking it into a canal. Wilson died at the scene.

"There's three hours between the time of the accident and the time his blood alcohol level was taken," said criminal defense attorney Grey Tesh.

The arrest report says Goodman left the scene and used a neighbor's phone to call 9-1-1 an hour after the crash. Case documents include a polo player's statement that Goodman claims after the crash, he visited the player's horse barn, which was stocked with alcohol.

"So one of the defenses may be, during the time after the accident, maybe Mr. Goodman consumed some alcohol," said Tesh.

But even if Goodman can beat the DUI manslaughter charge, he still faces the equally serious count of vehicular homicide.

"One thing I think the public doesn't understand is sometimes you're forced to go to trial," said Tesh.

In the Goodman case there were discussions about a plea deal, but no agreement. Goodman could plead guilty without a deal and take his chances with the judge. But in such a high profile case, trial may be the only option. Former prosecutor, now defense attorney Ron Herman, has the following observation.

"Even if evidence seems overwhelming at first, once the defense has an opportunity to present their case, sometimes that evidence is not as overwhelming as it seems," said Herman.

Goodman is represented by top criminal defense lawyer Roy Black of Miami. Goodman's lawyers just filed a stack of motions dealing with how jurors are selected and what jurors can and cannot hear during trial.

Tuesday's jury selection could go several days. Then there could be nearly two weeks of testimony.