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Driver gets 1 year in jail for Costa Mesa street takeover crash that killed cousin



Costa Mesa Police Department Major Accident Investigation Team (MAIT) work scene of an early morning fatal accident at the intersection of Sunflower Avenue and Hyland Avenue in Costa Mesa Thursday morning ,October 22, 2020. (Photo by Richard Koehler, Contributing Photographer)

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Over objections from prosecutors, a driver who pleaded guilty to vehicular manslaughter for a crash that killed his cousin and injured two bystanders during a street takeover in Costa Mesa was sentenced to one year in jail and then quickly freed after receiving credit for time served while awaiting trial.

Mynor Augusto Esquivelvalle spent less than a year behind bars following his arrest for the [Oct. 22, 2020 rollover crash](#) that took the life of his cousin, 23-year-old Sergio Marroquin, Jr.

Esquivelvalle last week agreed to a judge's offer requiring he plead guilty to felony vehicular manslaughter with gross negligence and reckless driving causing injury charges, as well as admit to a sentencing enhancement for inflicting great bodily injury, court records show.

Orange County Superior Court Judge Andre Manssourian sentenced Esquivelvalle to one year in jail and three years probation. After receiving more than a year's worth of credit for time served behind bars while awaiting trial, Esquivelvalle was immediately released,



Had he been convicted at trial, the vehicular manslaughter charge alone would have carried a potential six-year sentence.

"This individual showed no regard for the safety of anyone at this illegal event or even anyone else on the road that day – and he ended up killing his own cousin as a result," Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer said in a statement about the sentence. "Street racers must be held accountable for their actions and a slap on the wrist court offer sends the wrong message. These are deadly and violent crimes and they must be treated that way."

Esquivelvalle's cousin's family did not want him to serve a "severe punishment," prosecutors acknowledged in court filings, and the two other individuals struck in the crash reportedly did not want to be involved in the criminal case. Family members could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

But prosecutors also contended that Esquivelvalle has "shown no remorse" for a death and injuries caused by his own "dangerous driving maneuvers" and allege during the investigation he repeatedly lied to police about the cause of the crash and his involvement in a large street takeover.

Costa Mesa officers responding to Highland and Sunflower avenues just before 2:30 a.m. on Oct. 22 found a large group of between 60 and 70 cars and 100 to 150 pedestrians blocking off the intersection. A 2019 Chevrolet Colorado was on its side and a man was laying in the street.

The man, later identified as Marroquin, was pronounced dead at the scene. Two other bystanders reportedly struck by the vehicle were later contacted by police at local hospitals.

According to testimony by traffic investigators at a previous hearing, Esquivelvalle admitted to officers at the scene of the crash that he was the owner and driver of the pickup truck, but claimed that another car had struck his vehicle while he was driving through the intersection, dragging his cousin from the vehicle.

Based on witness statements and surveillance interviews, detectives believe that Esquivelvalle was doing doughnuts in his pickup truck – driving in circles – while Marroquin was hanging on the outside of the truck on the passenger side door. The pickup struck the two bystanders, prosecutors allege, before rolling over and crushing Marroquin.

The car meet that night was organized by an online group that had set up other street takeovers, spreading word of the gatherings through social media.

The group first descended upon the Anaheim Plaza parking lot on Euclid Street at around 1:30 a.m.

Witnesses told police that Esquivelvalle and Marroquin were among those at the Anaheim meetup and were watching when another vehicle doing doughnuts in the lot hit an 18-year-old woman. The two men, along with much of the rest of the group of car enthusiasts, then drove to the Costa Mesa intersection, according to court filings.

[Law enforcement officials across Southern California reported an uptick in street take-overs and street races during the pandemic](#), as stay-at-home orders resulted in less congested roadways and work and street closures left car aficionados with more time to fill. The temporary closure of venues that play host to legitimate car shows also left some enthusiasts opting for less-than-legal alternatives to show off their tricked-out vehicles.

With no barriers between vehicles driven by mostly young drivers and onlookers, a single mistake at the meetups could have deadly consequences, sending souped-up cars into a crowd of people.

"Street takeovers are illegal, they are dangerous, and they are increasingly deadly," Spitzer said. "Inexperienced drivers speeding dangerously close to crowds of spectators is killing street racers, spectators, and innocent bystanders and it has to stop."

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