

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Judge Sentences Teen Driver Who Killed Two, Injured Two in Fatal Towne Lake Crash
State vs. Oliver Luis Roman

September 30, 2025 – District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that on September 25 Superior Court Judge David L. Cannon Jr. sentenced Oliver Luis Roman, 19, of Powder Springs, to 20 years with the first 12 months in jail for charges related to a 2024 fatal car crash in the Towne Lake area of Woodstock.

At the standing-room-only hearing, Roman entered a non-negotiated guilty plea to two counts of homicide by vehicle in the first degree, three counts of serious injury by vehicle, and one count of reckless driving. A non-negotiated plea occurs when the defendant admits guilt to the charges, and both the State and the Defense present their sentencing recommendations and arguments before the judge imposes the sentence.

Charges stem from a Cherokee Sheriff's Office investigation into a one-car crash that occurred around 8 p.m. on January 9, 2024, on Towne Lake Parkway, near the entrance to Towne Lake Hills East. The investigation determined that Roman was driving a 2018 Mazda 6 at speeds exceeding 90 mph in a 40 mph zone with four teenage passengers. He lost control while navigating a sweeping right-hand curve along the wet roadway, and the car struck a tree in the center median.

Due to the severity of the crash, Cherokee Fire and Emergency Services had to extricate all five occupants from the mangled vehicle. Two passengers died as a result of the crash:

- Gabriel "Gabe" Escandon, 17, of Marietta, died at the scene.
- Esteban Cortez-Rendon, 18, of Woodstock, died en route to the hospital.

Two passengers suffered serious injuries:

- Alejandro Trejo, 18, visiting from Oklahoma, suffered a laceration on the liver, injury to the right kidney, contusion of the lung, multiple rib fractures, and multiple fractures in his right arm.
- Christopher Martins Peixoto, 17, of Marietta, suffered a traumatic brain injury, respiratory failure, acute kidney failure, multiple rib fractures, fractures in the first and second thoracic vertebra, and fractures in his left leg and arm. He spent 42 days in ICU followed by rehabilitation care at the Shepherd Center before returning home in a wheelchair to continue his recovery.

Through crash data analysis, investigators determined that Roman's vehicle reached 93 mph seconds before impact. A cell phone video taken by a passenger showed Roman weaving through traffic at high speeds. Witnesses also confirmed Roman's reckless driving.

The five young men had just left Cortez-Rendon's home after celebrating his 18th birthday with his parents. Four of them grew up together playing soccer; the fifth was a good friend of Cortez-Rendon visiting from Oklahoma. They all shared a strong Christian faith and deep dedication to the sport of soccer. They were college-bound high school students with promising futures.

At the plea hearing, the court heard victim impact statements from surviving victims and family members. What follows is a summary of these statements.

- Gabriel Escandon's family – Described their son as a hardworking, loyal young man of quiet faith. They described the immeasurable pain of his loss and urged Roman to dedicate his life to honoring those lost and injured.
- Esteban Cortez-Rendon's family – Spoke about Esteban's life of serving others and the devastating void left by his death. They shared the heartbreak of celebrating his birthday hours before his tragic death. They asked the court to impose the maximum sentence.
- Christopher Peixoto and Alejandro Trejo (surviving victims) – Shared the lasting effects of their injuries, the emotional trauma they continue to face, and the grief of losing their friends.
- Christopher Peixoto's family – Detailed his long recovery. His sister said her brother's dreams were taken away, and the course of all their lives were forever altered. They asked the court to impose the maximum punishment.

"The State's position is that this was an intentional, reckless act. When the defendant got behind the wheel that day, he chose to drive in a manner that showed complete disregard for the safety of others," said Assistant District Attorney Kelly Chavis, who prosecuted this case on behalf of the State. "The defendant had a responsibility to the four people in his vehicle, and he failed them. Two families lost loved ones, and two survivors will live with the physical and emotional impact of that day for the rest of their lives."

The State recommended a sentence of 20 years with 10 to serve in custody. The Defense asked for probation only. Chief Superior Court Judge David L. Cannon Jr. imposed a sentence of 20 years, with the first 12 months in the Cherokee County adult detention center.

As part of the sentence, Roman must complete 240 hours of community service, pay restitution, have no contact with the victims or their families, and surrender his driver's license. He was sentenced under the First Offender Act and given a behavioral incentive date of three years.

"The consequences of driving recklessly are tragic and permanent, and they ripple through families, friends, and entire communities," said District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway. "These were good young men with so much promise and potential. To the victims and their families: I want you to know that we see your pain and carry your stories with us forever."

This case was investigated by the Cherokee Sheriff's Office and prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Kelly Chavis, with assistance from Elizabeth Mackey, Office of the District Attorney, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit.

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The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.

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