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Taser gun used to nab suspect

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Chronicle

An out-of-control Inverness man became the first suspect to be shot by a taser-wielding sheriff's deputy when he engaged authorities in a game of cat and mouse early Tuesday.

According to his arrest report, 20-year-old Nicholas Jay Morelle's girlfriend called deputies about 3:12 a.m. Tuesday from Morelle's home to report that her boyfriend was drunk and took off in her 1988 Nissan Sentra.

The woman, whose name was unavailable Wednesday, told deputies Morelle didn't have a driver's license and she was worried about him because he was acting in a reckless manner. Deputies noted in the report that they saw 200-foot-long skid marks in front of the house on East Glover Street. They issued a bulletin telling other law enforcement officers in the area to be on the lookout for the car.

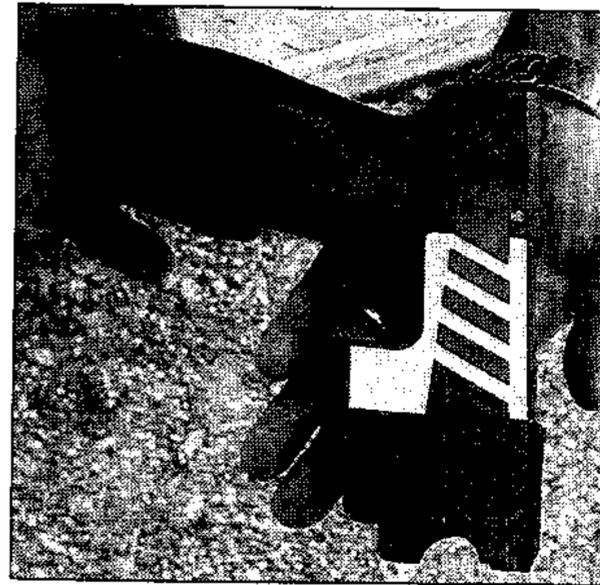
A short time later, Deputy Joe Labrador-Cortes was in the Winn-Dixie parking lot at Highlands Square in Inverness when he heard a vehicle come

to a screeching halt at the nearby intersection of U.S. 41 and State Road 44. Labrador-Cortes looked up to see the car turn onto State Road 44 and then into the McDonald's parking lot.

Labrador-Cortes followed and approached Morelle, who was sitting behind the wheel of the parked car. The report states the deputy told Morelle to turn the car off and get out of the car, but Morelle, who deputies say smelled of alcohol, refused. Morelle sped off. Deputies lost sight of him as he turned onto South Park Avenue in front of the sheriff's office.

Thinking he might be going home, deputies drove there and found Morelle sitting in the car and drinking from a bottle of beer. When deputies approached, he ran toward his home. The report states Morelle hit a deputy with the rear screen door as he ran inside, locking a sliding glass door behind him.

Deputies wrote in the report that Morelle became enraged and threatened to beat up the deputies. Morelle is also accused of calling 911 and screaming into the telephone before telling deputies he was going to his bedroom to get a gun.



Chronicle file

The sheriff's office recently equipped deputies with taser guns. An unruly suspect was taken into custody Tuesday after a taser successfully subdued him.

Deputies rushed the home to apprehend Morelle, but he escaped through his bedroom window and another foot chase began. About 100 yards from the home, Morelle laid down in a wooded area. A deputy found him, but Morelle refused to put up his hands and taunted deputies to shoot him.

That's exactly what they did.

But instead of bullets, Deputy Russell Howard shot Morelle with one of the sheriff's office's newest weapons, a taser. The gun-like device shoots two probes into a suspect's body and creates an arc of electricity between the two probes, temporarily forcing the suspect to the ground. The tasers have been on the hips of deputies for a couple of weeks, but Morelle was the first suspect shot with one.

After he was zapped with the taser, records show Morelle offered no resistance to deputies, who handcuffed him and put him in a patrol car.

Because he was shot with the taser, paramedics were called to the scene, but Morelle refused treatment. He also refused to take field sobriety and breath tests.

He was taken to the Citrus County Detention Facility and charged with battery on a law enforcement officer, resisting an officer with violence, resisting arrest without violence, possession of alcohol by a person younger than 21, driving with a suspended license and driving under the influence.

His bond was set at \$12,000.