



[Victim: Ben Lines]

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Teenager jailed following manslaughter conviction

A 17-year-old has been sentenced to seven-and-a-half years in prison after a man died over a row about stolen cannabis.

The teenager appeared at the Old Bailey where he was found guilty of manslaughter, having previously pleaded guilty to actual bodily harm and not guilty to murder.

Ben Lines, aged 20, was stabbed at approximately 14:50hrs on 13 October 2019 on Barnehurst Avenue in Bexleyheath. He was taken to hospital via London's Air Ambulance where he died shortly before 17:30hrs that same day.

The events that culminated in Ben's death started over the theft of a small amount of cannabis.

The teenager, who was 16 years old when the incident occurred, arranged to purchase the drug from Ben and did not pay. Instead, the car that the teenager was travelling in along with two other teenagers, drove away. Ben followed the car and the two vehicles later collided.

It was when the occupants of the vehicles began fighting; witnesses called police who arrived at Barnehurst Avenue at 15:00hrs.

When police arrived, Ben was receiving first aid from members of the public, an off-duty police officer and the London Ambulance Service on a grass bank area at the junction with Barnehurst Avenue and Merewood Road.

Also on the grass area was a black Ford Fiesta, which left tyre marks in the grass that appeared to show the vehicle had collided with a tree. Next to the grass area was an abandoned silver VW Golf that appeared to have crashed into a parked vehicle.

Local residents, who witnessed the immediate aftermath of the crash, reported seeing Ben get out of the driver's seat of a Ford Fiesta and approach the Golf where the front passenger, the 17-year-old boy, got out and the two started fighting.

During this fight, witnesses reported seeing the passenger produce a knife and stab Ben. The teenager then discarded the knife in the car and ran off with the driver of the Golf.

Residents attempted to detain both boys as they attempted to run off. The 17-year-old punched a 41-year-old man in the face and the two boys managed to flee the scene. The man suffered a cut lip and a swollen face and the teenager pleaded guilty to this assault in court.

Police were able to identify the passenger of the Golf and the 17-year-old attended a police station where he was arrested for murder. The teenager admitted being at the scene but denied any involvement in Ben's death.

On 15 October 2019, the teenager was charged with murder, and ABH against the resident who tried to detain him at the scene.

Detective Inspector Tariq Farooqi, from Specialist Crime (Homicide), led the investigation. Speaking after the Judge passed sentence, **he said:** “No sentence will ever replace or bring Ben back. The result of this tragic loss of life in the words of Ben’s mum will leave the family living a life sentence, never being able to be part of any special occasion again. A poignant message considering today would have been Ben’s 21st birthday.

“This was an incredibly tragic event that led to a young man losing his life. Regardless of the events that led up to Ben’s death, it in no way justifies the violence and the awful events that followed.

“I want to praise the bravery of members of the local community who not only gave evidence at court but also intervened at personal risk to themselves to prevent Ben’s attacker leaving the scene and gave Ben CPR. I hope their actions, alongside the verdict reached by the jury, can be of some comfort to Ben’s family and friends.

“This tragic loss of life sadly further underscores the utter senselessness of knife crime, no good ever comes from carrying a knife. The Met remains committed to tackling knife crime as evidenced by the swift actions of my team to identify, arrest and charge the person responsible for Ben’s death.”

A 16-year-old boy [A] arrested on suspicion of attempted murder has been released with no further action.

A 17-year-old boy [C], was charged with driving offences and ABH. He will stand trial at a magistrates’ court at a later date.

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