



Columbus Police Department

P.O. Box 1866 – 510 Tenth Street
Columbus, Georgia 31902-1866

Stoney Mathis
Chief of Police

J. Dent-Fitzpatrick
Assistant Chief



L. H. Deaton
Assistant Chief

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 1, 2025

Media Contact: Brittany Santiago
706-225-4462

Two Arrests Made in Shirley B. Winston Recreation Center Murder Case

*****UPDATE*****

On Tuesday, September 30, 2025, three additional suspects were arrested in connection with the death of Jacarie Charles. The Columbus Police Department's Fugitive Unit took the following individuals into custody:

- Elijah Smith, 20
- Cortez Turner, 21
- Christopher Culler, 18

Each suspect is charged with Murder and Armed Robbery.

In addition, JaMorris Baker was extradited to Columbus and booked into the Muscogee County Jail.

Smith, Turner, Culler, and Baker are scheduled to appear in Recorder's Court on Thursday, October 2, 2025, at 1:30 p.m. More arrests are expected as the investigation continues.

*****ORIGINAL RELEASE 9/23/2025*****

The Columbus Police Department announces that two suspects have been charged in connection with the August 29, 2025, murder at Shirley B. Winston Recreation Center.

On Monday, September 22, 2025, the Sumter County Sheriff's Office and the U.S. Marshals Task Force arrested Navaris Johnson, 18, on a murder warrant. Johnson, identified as the shooter through video evidence, was taken into custody without incident. A stolen firearm from Columbus was also recovered during a search of the residence where Johnson was arrested. He was extradited to Columbus and charged with Murder, Aggravated Assault, and Possession of a Firearm During the Commission of a Crime. Johnson is scheduled to appear in Recorder's Court on Wednesday, September 24, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

Additionally, JaMorris Baker, 20, who was arrested on September 11, 2025, has been charged for his role in the crime. He's charged with Murder and Aggravated Assault. Investigators determined Baker supplied the backpack to Johnson just prior to the shooting. He is currently being held in Russell County, pending extradition.

The incident occurred on August 29, 2025, when officers responded to Shirley B. Winston Recreation Center after reports of a male shot inside the gym. The victim was located with a gunshot wound and pronounced deceased at the scene. Surveillance video captured the suspect confronting the victim, attempting to take his belongings, and then shooting him once in the chest. The suspect then stole items from the victim before fleeing.



Columbus Police Department

P.O. Box 1866 – 510 Tenth Street
Columbus, Georgia 31902-1866



J. Dent-Fitzpatrick
Assistant Chief

Stoney Mathis
Chief of Police

L. H. Deaton
Assistant Chief

“Our message is clear—if you commit violent acts in our city, we will find you, and we will hold you accountable,” said Chief Stoney Mathis. **“The dedication of our officers, paired with the partnerships we’ve built, makes that possible.”**

Assistant Chief Lance Deaton said, **“These two are off the streets and more arrests are pending. But getting a handle on violent crime is going to take a community effort. We need every citizen to stand with us so that together, we can make Columbus safer.”**

“A vicious attack like this will not be tolerated,” said Mayor Skip Henderson. **“Thanks to the technology we have in place and the talent and dedication of the men and women of the Columbus Police Department, if you commit a crime like this, you have a 100 percent chance of being caught.”**

The Columbus Police Department would like to thank the Russell County Sheriff’s Office, Lee County Sheriff’s Office, Sumter County Sheriff’s Office, Phenix City Police Department, the U.S. Marshals Task Force, and the CPD Violent Crimes and Fugitive Units for their tireless work.

The case remains under investigation, and additional arrests are expected.

CASE TIMELINE

- **Aug. 29, 2025, 2:30 p.m. — Officers dispatched to Shirley B. Winston Park. Victim found shot in the chest. Pronounced deceased at 3:14 p.m. Surveillance video captures shooting.**
- **Aug. 29, 2025 — Suspect vehicle located at Patriot Place Apartments. Multiple individuals detained and interviewed.**
- **Sept. 5, 2025 — Shooter positively identified as Navaris Johnson through video and social media investigation. Warrants issued for Murder and Possession of a Firearm During Commission of a Crime.**
- **Sept. 11, 2025 — JaMorris Baker charged for providing the backpack used in the crime. Held in Russell County awaiting extradition.**
- **Sept. 22, 2025 — Johnson arrested by Sumter County Sheriff’s Office and U.S. Marshals Task Force. Stolen firearm recovered.**
- **September 23, 2025 — Warrants for Armed Robbery taken out and added for Johnson and Baker**
- **Sept. 24, 2025 — Johnson scheduled to appear in Recorder’s Court at 1:30 p.m.**



J. Dent-Fitzpatrick
Assistant Chief

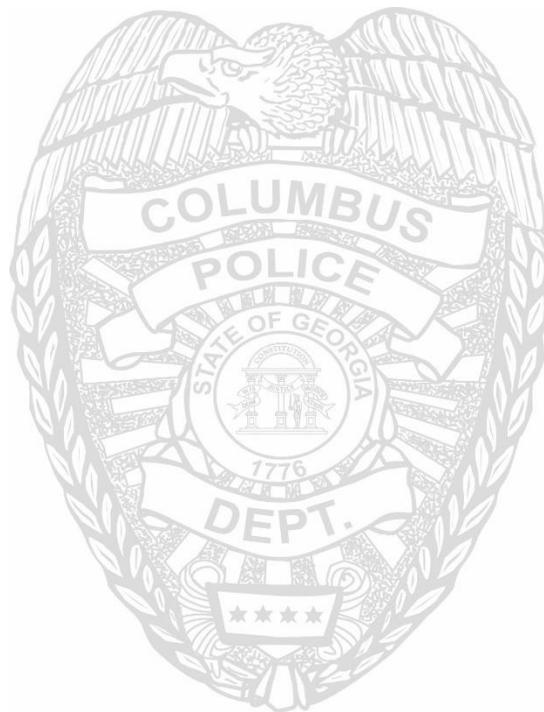
Columbus Police Department

P.O. Box 1866 – 510 Tenth Street
Columbus, Georgia 31902-1866

Stoney Mathis
Chief of Police



L. H. Deaton
Assistant Chief





Columbus Police Department

P.O. Box 1866 – 510 Tenth Street
Columbus, Georgia 31902-1866



J. Dent-Fitzpatrick
Assistant Chief

Stoney Mathis
Chief of Police

L. H. Deaton
Assistant Chief



NAVARIS JOHNSON, 18



Columbus Police Department

P.O. Box 1866 – 510 Tenth Street
Columbus, Georgia 31902-1866



J. Dent-Fitzpatrick
Assistant Chief

Stoney Mathis
Chief of Police

L. H. Deaton
Assistant Chief



JAMORRIS BAKER, 20