

# Official Report



Division of Forensic Sciences  
Georgia Bureau of Investigation  
State of Georgia

Central Regional Lab  
DOFS Case #: 2013-4000101  
Report Date: 05/02/2013

George Herrin, Jr., Ph.D.  
Deputy Director

\* NAME Accredited \*



## Requested Service: Autopsy

Agency: Lowndes Co. Coroner  
Agency Ref#:   
Requested by: B. Watson

## Case Individuals:

Victim (Juv.): KENDRICK JOHNSON

## Evidence:

2013-4000101-001      Decedent

## Results and Conclusions:

Evidence Submission: 001

In accordance with the Georgia Death Investigation Act, an autopsy is performed on the body of Kendrick Johnson at the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Central Regional Medical Examiner's Office on 01/14/13. The autopsy is begun at 0940 and the prosector is Dr. Maryanne Gaffney-Kraft.

Cause of Death:  
Positional asphyxia

Pathologic Diagnoses:  
Well-developed and well-nourished black teenage male  
Congestive-decomposition changes of the head, neck, torso and upper extremities  
No significant injuries identified

### Presentation of Body:

The body is received in a body bag lying on and partially wrapped in a white sheet; the portion of the sheet corresponding to the upper body shows varying amounts of decomposition fluid soiling predominantly centered on the head. The body shows congestive-decomposition changes of the head, neck, torso and bilateral upper extremities; purge fluid drains from the nose and mouth. Body identification consists of identification tags on the right foot and body bag. The body is clothed in white socks, denim jeans which are unbuttoned and unzipped, a white with dark-color striped cloth/material belt with a white metal buckle which is unbuckled, black sports shorts, blue-tone boxer underwear, a white T-shirt, a yellow-orange sleeveless T-shirt and a white sleeveless tank top; the front pockets of the jeans are partially pulled out; the clothing shows varying amounts of decomposition fluid/purge soiling predominantly involving the shirts; no obvious foreign body material or acute damage is present. Accompanying the body, lying on and across the upper chest, is a set of white with black wire earphones/buds; one of the attaching wires is broken; a wadded 'Starburst' wrapper is stuck to the posterior left proximal forearm/elbow. Accompanying the body, within one of the pockets of the jeans, are three tan/brown rubber band-like hair ties; numerous pieces of adhered black hair are present. There is no evidence of medical intervention.

External Examination:  
Body Condition: Intact with decomposition  
Length: 70 inches  
Weight: 160 pounds

Body Heat: Room temperature  
Rigor: Absent  
Livor: Upper body: head, neck, upper torso and extremities  
Hair: Black in dreadlocks  
Eyes: Brownish with congestive-decomposition changes  
Teeth: Natural in good condition  
Facial Hair: Thin, black chin hair  
Fingernails: Intact, trimmed and worn short; no obvious foreign body material present

The body is that of a well-developed and well-nourished black teenage male appearing compatible with the reported age. Congestive-decomposition changes are manifested by variable bloating, red-green-black skin discoloration with and without marbling, vesicle formation and skin slippage of the head, neck, torso and upper extremities; the changes increase in degree inferior to superior. Early hair slippage, purge and a foul odor are also present. The head is normally formed and the nose and ears are not unusual; the left ear shows a bent-lobe position-artifact. The lips, gums and oral cavity are without obvious focal lesions. The neck is without masses and the larynx is in the midline. The chest and back are well developed and symmetrical. The abdomen is bloated; no obvious fluid collection is present. The external genitalia are that of a normal teenage male. The testes are descended within the scrotum and the penis is unremarkable; patchy scrotal drying is present. The anus and perineum are without focal lesions. The upper and lower extremities are well developed and symmetrical without absence of digits. Identifying marks and scars consist of a hypopigmented curvilinear scar of the right superior-medial knee and a hypopigmented patch of the right anterior-lateral distal thigh.

Evidence of Injury:

Blunt Force Injury:

On the right posterior-medial wrist there is a 1/8 x 1/8 inch superficial abrasion. On the left distal 4th finger, involving the dorsal skin just proximal to the cuticle, there are two superficial abrasions measuring 1/8 x <1/8 inch and 3/16 x <1/8 inch.

On the left distal 4th finger, involving the dorsal skin overlying the distal interphalangeal joint, there is a 5/16 inch superficial tear with no associated hemorrhage.

No other injuries are identified.

Additional Procedures:

Photographs: Documentary photographs are obtained.

Radiographs: A postmortem head x-ray is performed at autopsy and is negative for bony abnormalities/fractures or radio-opaque weaponry.

Evidence Collected:

The bloodstain card is collected as evidence. Postmortem urine and liver are obtained at autopsy; blood and vitreous could not be obtained.

Personal Effects Disposition:

The clothing, set of earphones/buds and hair ties (3) are released with the body.

Internal Examination:

Body Cavities:

A Y-shaped thoraco-abdominal incision is made and the organs are examined in-situ and eviscerated in the usual fashion. The bilateral pleural and peritoneal cavities contain no significant fluid. No significant adhesions are present. All body organs are present and in their normal anatomical positions; variable congestive-decomposition changes are present and increase in degree inferior to superior; intravascular blood is not present.

Cardiovascular System:

The pericardial sac is free of significant fluid and adhesions. The heart weighs 260 grams and is structurally normal. The epicardium is smooth and glistening with mild to moderate amounts of epicardial adipose tissue. The coronary arteries arise normally, follow the usual distribution and are widely patent without evidence of abnormality or significant atherosclerosis. The chambers and valves bear the usual size-position relationships and are unremarkable. The myocardium is uniform and shows no evidence of acute infarction, scarring, or focal lesion. The aorta and its major branches arise normally, follow the usual distribution and are without significant atherosclerosis.

Neck:

A layered dissection of the anterior neck is performed. Examination of the soft tissues of the neck including the strap muscles and large vessels reveals no abnormalities. The hyoid bone and laryngeal cartilages are intact. The larynx is clear. The lingual mucosa is intact; the underlying musculature is devoid of hemorrhage.

Respiratory System:

The right and left lungs weigh 260 and 240 grams respectively. The upper and lower airways are free of debris and foreign material; the surface mucosa is without focal lesion. The pleural surfaces are smooth. The lungs are normally formed. The parenchyma of both lungs is without obvious consolidation or focal lesions. The pulmonary arteries are free of thrombi or emboli.

Gastrointestinal Tract:

The GI tract shows normal configuration and is intact throughout its length. The esophageal mucosa is without focal lesions. The stomach contains a minimal amount of partially-digested, unrecognizable food; the mucosa is without focal lesions. The small and large bowels are unremarkable and contain progressively formed stool. The appendix is present.

Hepatobiliary System:

The liver weighs 860 grams. The capsule is intact and the parenchyma is uniform without focal lesions. The gallbladder contains a moderate amount of bile; the mucosa is unremarkable. The extrahepatic biliary tree is patent.

Genitourinary System:

The right and left kidneys are of normal size and shape weighing 90 and 100 grams respectively. The capsules strip with ease from the underlying smooth cortical surfaces. The renal architecture is intact and is without focal lesions. The cortices are of normal thickness and the cortical-medullary junctions are sharp. The ureters are intact and unremarkable. The bladder contains a moderate amount of yellow clear urine; the mucosa is unremarkable. The prostate, seminal vesicles and testes are unremarkable without focal lesions.

Endocrine System:

The thyroid and bilateral adrenal glands are unremarkable without focal lesions. The pancreas is of normal size and shape without focal lesions.

Immunologic System:

The spleen weighs 90 grams. The capsule is intact and the parenchyma is congested but without obvious focal lesions. The thymus is of normal size and shape for age without focal lesions. No significant lymphadenopathy is identified.

Central Nervous System:

The dura mater is intact and is unremarkable without focal lesions. The leptomeninges are thin and delicate without evidence of purulent infection. The vasculature at the base of the brain is normally formed and is intact without evidence of abnormality or significant atherosclerosis. The brain weighs 1280 grams. The cerebral hemispheres are symmetrical and show a normal gyral pattern. Mild generalized edema is present without evidence of herniation. Coronal sections reveal normal architecture of the cortical gray matter, subcortical white matter, basal ganglia and thalami; no focal lesions or hemorrhages are present. The ventricular system is

symmetrical and not dilated. The brainstem and cerebellum are unremarkable.

**Musculoskeletal System:**

The bony framework and supporting musculature/soft tissues are well developed and without obvious focal lesions. The musculature/soft tissues of the head, neck, torso and upper extremities show variable congestive-decomposition changes, which increase in degree inferior to superior; bilateral vertical incisions of the back are made for examination. A posterior neck dissection is performed at autopsy and is negative for injuries/abnormalities.

**Microscopic Examination:**

Sections of heart, lung, thymus, liver, spleen, pancreas, kidney, adrenal gland and brain are examined and show autolysis-decomposition changes; no obvious pathology is identified.

**Summary and Interpretation:**

The decedent is a 17-year-old black teenage male who was found deceased, upside-down in the central-hole of a rolled-up gym mat, which was stored standing-on-end in a vertical position in the gym of his high school. Per investigative reports, the decedent was seen via video cameras entering the gym alone on the afternoon of 01/10/13; the decedent was reported missing by his family the night/early morning of 01/10/13-01/11/13; the decedent was found the morning of 01/11/13 by students walking on top of the rolled-up mats. Law enforcement investigative findings, crime scene investigator findings/report, coroner's findings, witness statements and scene photographs are received, reviewed and discussed.

The finding at autopsy is a well-developed and well-nourished black teenage male with congestive-decomposition changes of the head, neck, torso and upper extremities. No significant natural disease process or injuries are identified.

Analysis of postmortem liver for drug screen testing is negative for cocaine/cocaine metabolites and common opioids. Analysis of postmortem liver for drug confirmation testing is negative for a comprehensive drug screen.

Given the complete autopsy including toxicology and histology, the scene photographs, the scene forensic testing, the law enforcement investigative findings including crime scene investigator report and witness statements, and the coroner's findings, it is my opinion the cause of death in this case is positional asphyxia and the manner of death is accident.

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Only those items discussed in the results above were analyzed for this report. The above represents the interpretations/opinions of the undersigned analyst. Evidence analyzed in this report will be returned to the submitting agency. Biological evidence (body fluids and tissues) and fire debris extracts will be destroyed after one year. This report may not be reproduced except in full without written permission of the laboratory.

Technical notes and data supporting the conclusions and findings in this report are maintained within the laboratory case records.

This case may contain evidence that must be preserved in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 17-5-56.



Maryanne Gaffney-Kraft  
Regional Medical Examiner

**Related Agencies:**

Southern Judicial Circuit  
Child Abuse Protocol Committee-Lowndes Co.  
Child Fatality Review Board  
GBI-Medical Examiner Central  
Lowndes Co. District Attorney  
Lowndes Co. Sheriff's Office

ACN: DR GAFFNEY-KRAFT

ACN: 130101520

**End of Official Report**