Case Brief: People v. Martz

People v. Martz is the trial of Nova Martz, a second-year student at Condorville Community College (CCC). Martz faces two charges: (1) a violation of California Vehicle Code Section 23109 (VC 23109), which prohibits illegal contests of speed causing serious bodily injury (a felony); and (2) Condorville City Code, Chapter 20, which prohibits illegal racing clubs in Condorville (a misdemeanor).

The prosecution alleges that on Friday, May 22, 2026, at approximately 8:05 PM, Martz participated in an illegal contest of speed against Val Foley, another CCC student, at the intersection of Main Street and Coyote Avenue in Condorville. When the two drivers arrived at the intersection, Foley brought her vehicle side-by-side with Martz. When the light turned green, both vehicles accelerated, but Foley immediately lost control of her vehicle, which then collided with a light pole. Foley suffered serious injuries as a result and is currently in a non-responsive state. Jae Duffy, a passenger in Foley's vehicle, was an eyewitness who alleges that it was clear both Martz and Foley intended to race that night and that they had a history of challenging each other to races. Duffy will testify that Martz believed that Martz was in an illegal racing club with Foley called the "Kangaroo Ratz." Another eyewitness, Alex Mishler, will testify that Martz's car engine was revving immediately prior to the alleged race. An automotive expert witness alleges that Martz's vehicle accelerated at an unusually high rate of speed.

The defense does not dispute that both vehicles were at the intersection on May 22, but the defense also argues that Martz had no intention to race that night, nor did Martz willfully participate in an illegal speed contest. Martz will testify that Martz led a caravan of cars to a local fast-food stand, a customary action of Martz, Foley, and others. Martz will also testify to mechanical issues with Martz's car that could explain a sudden appearance of acceleration or "revving." Lin St. George, Martz's friend and an eyewitness, will testify to Foley taunting Martz just prior to the alleged race, but that Martz did not respond in kind. St. George also will testify that Martz never intended to be involved in illegal racing activities. The defense will call Cam Doggett to corroborate Martz's testimony about the engine. A defense automotive expert that Martz could not have accelerated at a very high rate of speed at the moment of the incident.

The defense is bringing a pretrial motion to dismiss Count Two, which prohibits illegal racing clubs in Condorville. The first issue revolves around the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution, and a second issue revolves around the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, specifically regarding Nova Martz's rights to freedom of speech.

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