



Penn State fraternity brother avoids prison time for charges related to death of Tim Piazza

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(CNN) A former Penn State University fraternity brother who pleaded guilty to several charges in a student's alcohol-fueled death was sentenced to probation on Tuesday and will not spend time in prison.

Ryan Burke, 21, pleaded guilty last month to four counts of hazing and five counts related to unlawful acts involving liquor, the office of Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro said.

He was sentenced to 30 months' probation, including three months of house arrest, and 100 hours of community service, said his attorney.

The charges stem from the February 2017 death of Timothy Piazza, a 19-year-old sophomore who died after drinking large quantities of alcohol in his first night pledging at Beta Theta Pi fraternity. Piazza suffered a traumatic brain injury from several falls, including down a set of basement stairs, according to a grand jury investigation.



Prosecutors said the case involves 26 defendants. Burke was the first to plead guilty in Centre County Court.

Tom Kline, the Piazza family attorney, said the sentence was an important step toward justice for the family.

"With the recognition by the sentencing judge of the aggravating circumstances involved in the death of Tim Piazza, along with the sentence including loss of freedom of an admitted perpetrator of the crime, today's sentencing is an important step on the long road to justice for the Piazza family," he said.

Burke's attorney, Philip Masorti, had said that they didn't ask for a plea agreement and prosecutors didn't offer one, according to CNN's sister station, HLN.

"We came to court, we acknowledged responsibility and he's prepared to be sentenced," Masorti said in June.

Burke has admitted being at the party and encouraging drinking games with Piazza and other pledges. After the games, Burke walked around with a bottle of vodka and made underage pledges, including Piazza, drink from it, prosecutors said.

Surveillance video showed Piazza was given at least 18 drinks in 82 minutes by members of the fraternity. Piazza's blood-alcohol level went "from a zero to as high as a .36," a grand jury report said, almost five times the legal limit.