

**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**22-year-old Woodstock man sentenced to 20 years in prison,  
after jury finds him guilty of family violence and drug charges**  
**State vs. Justin Cameron Finnegan**

**December 1, 2022** – District Attorney Shannon Wallace announces that a Cherokee County jury has convicted Justin Cameron Finnegan, 22, of kidnapping, possession of Schedule II controlled substances, violating a Family Violence Order, family violence aggravated assault, false imprisonment, and other charges.

Chief Judge Ellen McElyea sentenced Finnegan on September 16, 2022, to a total of 30 years, with the first 20 years to serve in prison. The final 10 years of the sentence may be served on probation with special conditions imposed. These conditions include no contact with the victim or witnesses in the case, mental health and substance abuse assessments, completion of a family violence intervention program, no alcohol and drug use, and no firearms.

Charges stem from multiple domestic violence incidents that occurred over the course of five months in 2021.

On the morning of June 17, 2021, law enforcement first became aware of domestic violence in a Woodstock home where Finnegan and his girlfriend lived. On that day, an Uber driver called 911 after witnessing a woman leave a house, only to be forced back inside, against her will, by a man. The driver had been waiting at the house to pick up a rider and could hear the woman screaming, “Let me go!” The victim later told Cherokee Sheriff’s Office deputies she ordered the Uber but Finnegan would not let her leave the house.

CSO deputies arrested Finnegan for kidnapping, possession of a Schedule II controlled substance, and other charges. Bond conditions and a Family Violence Order stipulated that the defendant was forbidden to have contact with the victim. He was also not permitted to return to the home.

On October 25, 2021, law enforcement responded to another domestic violence incident at the same house. During this assault inside the home, Finnegan hit the same victim multiple times on both sides of her face and her nose, and detained her against her will. When she finally escaped and got out of the house into the yard, he tackled her from behind and dragged her by the hair back to the house. While outside the home, he strangled her two times – once on the ground, once pinned against a car.

Deputies arrested Finnegan again and charged him with family violence aggravated assault, false imprisonment, family violence simple battery, and possession of methamphetamine. He was also charged with violating the Family Violence Order.

During the trial, which took place August 23-25, 2022, Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Rachel Ashe told the Cherokee County jury that, while this case involved addiction, domestic violence was at its core.

“On their first date, when the victim was 18 years old, Justin Finnegan introduced her to Xanax. From there, he took her deep into the world of drugs and addiction,” said Deputy Chief ADA Ashe. “The victim testified that other guys give their girlfriends flowers, but he gave her drugs and abused her. This relationship was both violent and toxic. She was isolated from her friends and family, addicted to drugs, and stuck in a dangerous relationship. She feared that someday he would kill her.”

Ten people testified at the trial, including seven witnesses for the State. The victim testified, in detail, about the violence she endured throughout their relationship, including a strangulation incident that occurred days prior to Finnegan’s arrest on October 25.

“He put me against a wall and put his hand around my neck and I could not breathe,” the victim said during the trial. “It hurt, my head started to feel dizzy, and my biggest concern was I don’t know if he’s going to stop, I don’t know if he has enough self-control to make himself stop.”

At the conclusion of the trial, the jury found Finnegan guilty of eight charges.

“This defendant hid abuse behind closed doors, controlling his girlfriend by pushing her, hitting her, and strangling her. Law enforcement was unaware of what was going on inside that house, until violence escaped the house and a stranger witnessed it,” said District Attorney Shannon Wallace. “If not for that 911 call, this story may have had a different ending. Fortunately, Cherokee Sheriff’s Office conducted a thorough investigation and a Cherokee County jury convicted this defendant, protecting this victim from further abuse.”

This case was investigated by the Cherokee Sheriff’s Office and prosecuted by Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Rachel Ashe, of the Domestic Violence Unit, Office of the District Attorney, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit.

### **Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence typically follows a pattern, with tension building, followed by a major act of violence, a calm period, and then cycling back to tension building. As time passes, the violent episodes often get more serious and may lead to a lethal act.

Strangulation is one of the most lethal forms of domestic violence even though injuries may appear to be mild or victims may have no visible marks. According to the Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention, strangulation is the ultimate form of power and control in which the batterer asserts control over the victim’s next breath. Odds for homicide increase substantially (750%) for victims who have been previously strangled.

If you or someone you know is impacted by domestic violence, please contact the Cherokee Family Violence Center, CFVC.org, 770-479-1703 (24/7 crisis hotline). In case of an emergency, call 911.

*The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.*

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