

# Joy ride driver pulls a fast one

■ An 18-year-old man stole a car from a construction site in Homestead then drove it to the Homestead-Miami Speedway for a test drive, police say.

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Maybe he wanted to be a NASCAR driver. But first, he needed a set of wheels.

Police say Felipe Ramos, 18, stole a 2004 Infiniti G35 with the keys left in the ignition Wednesday, drove it to Homestead-Miami Speedway, barreled past security guards who tried to flag him down, ripped through the closed gates and took to the track.

Then he put the car through its paces. Round and round, the would-be racer tore through the turns, testing the gray, four-door car at speeds exceeding 100 mph before finally stopping, sometime around the fourth lap.

No other drivers were on the track.

Speedway workers held him until police arrived.

"He must have wanted to get on the track pretty bad," speedway president Curtis Gray said. "Nothing like that has ever happened here before."

Homestead Police arrested Ramos, charging him with grand theft auto, burglary, criminal mischief and reckless driving. The car, a loaner being used by an Infiniti customer getting his car repaired, suffered about \$3,000 worth of damage to the bumper, hood and lights, according to preliminary estimates.

Infiniti service consultant Steve Anteen got a call from the customer after the car was recovered.

"According to the customer, the guy was telling police officers how well the car did while he was in the back of the police car," Anteen said.

Infiniti would not release the customer's name.

The incident began about 9:30 a.m. when the customer parked the car, owned by South Motors Infiniti on South Dixie Highway near Homestead, at the Baptist Hospital



RAMOS

## HOMESTEAD

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•SPEEDWAY, FROM 1B

construction site at 2800 NE 8th St. He left the keys inside.

When the customer returned to spot where he had left the car, it was gone. In its place: a bicycle lying on the ground. The customer reported the loss to Anteen when he realized it was missing.

### LOST AND FOUND

An hour later, Anteen's phone rang again. This time, the customer told him the police found the car at the speedway.

"[The customer] said the guy had done four or five laps and lost it at turn four," Anteen said.

Speedway president Gray said the minute the car crashed through the gates, security officers and workers tried to stop Ramos.

"Our track is pretty secure," he said. "He just drove through one of our guard gates and we had people on the radio to make sure the track was clear."

### BACK AT THE SHOP

The car is now back at the Infiniti shop, where it will be repaired. The customer's insurance company will have to pay for the damage, though the customer will be responsible for the deductible, Anteen said.

Ramos "had a good time out there," Anteen laughed.

### SKID MARKS

Homestead Police Capt. Ed Bowe said he didn't know whether the car had spun out on the track or Ramos decided to stop on his own.

"There were several skid marks throughout the track caused by the subject," Bowe said.

"I'm not aware of anything like this happening before," he added. "Who knows what he was thinking? It's kind of strange."

*Herald staff writer Brooke Prescott contributed to this report.*