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Waco policeman cleared in shooting of man

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Waco Police Sgt. Dean Priddy was cleared Tuesday when a McLennan County grand jury said there was insufficient evidence to indict him in the shooting of Michael Wayne Royals, 29, of Lacy-Lakeview while Royals was handcuffed and in police custody.

Royals, of 302 South Lacy, was shot in the abdomen by Priddy the night of March 12 after Royals was apprehended after a high-speed chase through parts of Waco, Bellmead and Lacy-Lakeview.

Several officers in the Waco Police Department's drug enforcement unit and a Depart-

ment of Public Safety trooper were involved in the chase and arrest of Royals.

Special prosecutor Alan Levy presented about a dozen witnesses, including Waco Police Chief Larry Scott, Royals and Priddy during the two-day grand jury investigation.

"We're glad to get it behind us," Scott said Tuesday afternoon. "He (Priddy) is real relieved. We're real proud that it was a no-bill."

Priddy was cleared of any wrongdoing by an internal investigation at the police department, the chief said. But anytime an outside group, such as the grand jury, looks into a matter and arrives at the same conclusion as an internal investigation, "it just confirms what your inves-

tigation showed, and lends credibility to the internal investigation," he said.

Scott said he does not think the shooting has caused any problems with the public's attitude toward the department.

Police reports indicate Royals crashed his pickup truck through a gate and onto a private drive south of TSTI-Waco Airport. Several officers pursued Royals on foot into a nearby field, where they apprehended him. As Royals was being led back to a patrol car, Priddy approached Royals, and his revolver discharged, according to reports.

Royals was listed in critical condition in the intensive-care unit at Providence Hospital for

about three weeks, before being moved to a private room and eventually discharged from the hospital.

A different McLennan County grand jury indicted Royals in June on charges of aggravated assault and possession of a controlled substance, methamphetamine. The grand jury this week was looking into the shooting of Royals by Priddy.

In an interview with the *Tribune-Herald* in April, Royals said from his hospital bed that he was shot intentionally from pointblank range.

Police department spokesmen had maintained the shooting was accidental when Priddy tripped or stumbled.