

Man guilty of killing eyewitness
NICOLE BARDO-COLON, nbardo@MiamiHerald.com

A Miami-Dade jury, after less than two hours of deliberation, found a man guilty of murdering the one eyewitness in his brother's murder trial.

Wadada Delhall, 31, was found guilty on all counts: first-degree murder, possession of a firearm in the commission of a felony and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

He shook his head as he heard the verdict and kept looking back at both his family and friends, and the family of the victim.

"It's straight, dawg," Delhall said to his family as he left the court room raising his fist in the air. "One love."

The victim, Hubert McCrae, an Opa-locka mechanic, was shot at least 11 times in 2001.

His family occupied the front two rows in the courtroom Friday. Though tearful, the family declined to comment about the verdict as they embraced one another.

Defense attorney Terence Lenamon said that for the next phase of the trial, the sentencing hearing, he will try to emphasize Delhall's life experiences.

DEATH PENALTY LOOMS

On Thursday, Delhall told the jurors how he had been the legal guardian of his five younger siblings since the age of 18, after both his parents were deported. Lenamon said he is hoping for life in prison instead of the death penalty.

"Obviously I am disappointed with the verdict," Lenamon said. "At this point I am trying to save his life."

Ironically, McCrae was killed, according to prosecutors, because Delhall was trying to protect one of his brother's from the death penalty.

In 2001 Negus Delhall was facing murder charges for killing a man over a drug dispute in 1998, in the same auto-repair shop where McCrae worked and was killed.

Negus Delhall is now serving life in prison for that killing.

But Wadada Delhall denied any involvement in McCrae's death.

'HE LIES'

Assistant state attorney Gail Levine told the jury during closing arguments Friday that Wadada Delhall is a liar and they should hold him accountable.

"He's a four-time convicted felon," she said pointing at the defendant. "He lies under oath time and time again."

Among the evidence she presented was a signed confession by Delhall, a bullet found in Delhall's book bag and testimony from detectives involved in the case.

Lenamon disputed the bullet linked his client to the crime, saying it did not match the bullets from the scene.

As to the confession, Delhall said detectives coerced him into writing it.

"I'm angry with myself because I let this man trick me into something I know I didn't do," he said of signing the statement.

DETAILS CONFESSED

A police investigator and Miami-Dade Det. John Butchko, a veteran in the county's homicide division, both told the jury that Dehall confessed to them.

Butchko said Delhall had told him the details of the murder: driving to the garage with the intent to kill and using two guns.

Levine said in order to believe Delhall's defense, the jury would have to believe that everyone else is lying, including the deceased.

KILLER IDENTIFIED

As McCrae lay dying, shot more than 11 times, he told the first officer who arrived that his killer was Negus Delhall's brother.

"No person, no one, deserved to be riddled with bullets by the brother of the one they accused," Levine said.

But the defense tried to poke holes in the argument, saying McCrae could have meant one of Negus Delhall's other brothers.

The jury didn't buy it.

The penalty phase of the hearing is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on Aug. 13.