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Jury hears about killer's criminal past

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The Miami-Dade jurors who convicted Harrell Braddy of killing a 5-year-old girl by leaving her alone in the Everglades learned a little more about the 58-year-old felon on Tuesday.

They learned about his criminal past, for example. The jury got to hear Braddy's background so they can decide whether he should be executed for the murder of Quatisha Maycock.

During last month's first phase of the trial, the jury learned that the child was found dead in the Everglades in November 1998 with alligator bite marks on her head and chest. Braddy told detectives he left her there because she had witnessed him choke her mother, Shandelle Maycock, of North Miami-Dade. He left the mother for dead in a Palm Beach County cane field on U.S. 27, but she survived.

Braddy was convicted of the girl's murder on July 17. In arguing for the death penalty, Assistant State Attorney Abbe Rifkin isn't just relying on the horrific nature of the crime. She is also presenting evidence of Braddy's past to try to show a pattern of behavior. Braddy has been convicted of robbery, kidnapping, escaping, and trying to kill a corrections officer by choking him.

And he allegedly carjacked a gospel singer in a parking lot in Hialeah and drove him to the same stretch of U.S. 27 where he left Shandelle Maycock. The man testified in Circuit Court on Tuesday that he jumped out of the car and ran from Braddy because he was convinced he was about to be killed. Braddy has not been convicted of the carjacking, but jurors were allowed to hear about it because of the similarity to what he did to Shandelle Maycock. Rifkin also told the jury that Braddy comes from a good family. He is one of six brothers, and had five children of his own with his wife, who has stuck by him even while he has been in prison.

The fact that Braddy has a supportive family is even more reason to sentence him to death, Rifkin said. "He had an opportunity for happiness," she said. "In spite of that, in spite of this loving family that he was privileged to be born into, this is the road he took."

Defense attorney Terence **Lenamon** questioned Rifkin's contention that little Quatisha died of the injuries she sustained when alligators bit her head and chest. He claimed the child died when her mother grabbed her and jumped out of Braddy's car.

"There is no question here and we are conceding and acknowledging that, based on your verdict, the responsibility for that little girl's death is Mr. Braddy's," he said. "The question is, how did she die and when did she die?"

Testimony is set to continue Wednesday in front of Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Leonard Glick.

The penalty phase of the trial is expected to last through Thursday and maybe longer. The case was delayed Tuesday morning because one juror was arrested after the jury convicted Braddy. Glick dismissed the juror.

If the jury votes for death, the ultimate decision will be up to Glick.