

EDITOR'S PICK

Teen convicted of murder in Fredericksburg stabbings

Keith Epps

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A teenager who killed two men during a “senseless” altercation earlier this year was convicted Thursday of two counts of second-degree murder.

Jabar Ali Taylor, 16, was also convicted of malicious wounding and criminal solicitation for his actions during a wild incident outside the Cook Out restaurant in Fredericksburg early June 14.

Taylor stabbed three men during the 24-second altercation, which began when Taylor’s older brother, Kyreem Taylor, approached a vehicle in the drive-through and tried to yank the driver out.

Testimony indicated that the Taylors and their friends believed that expletives and statements such as “pull up your pants” were directed at them.

A Fredericksburg circuit jury deliberated several hours before announcing the guilty verdicts. Because Taylor was a juvenile at the time of his arrest, the jury did not recommend a sentence.

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Instead, Judge Gordon Willis will formally sentence Jabar Taylor on Feb. 23.

Mac Oliver Hughes, 30, of Portsmouth and Anthony J. Carter, 28, of Albany, Ga. were killed. Hughes was stabbed in the heart, while Carter had a primary artery severed.

Hughes and Carter were in town to celebrate the 29th birthday of Jason Edward Fitch of Stafford County. Fitch was stabbed four times but survived.

Fitch’s group had been at Jay’s Lounge in the Greenbrier Shopping Center. When the lounge closed about 2 a.m., Fitch and his friends made their way to the nearby Cook Out to get something to eat.

Surveillance video shown to the jurors showed a group of young people surrounding a vehicle at the Cook Out. Kyreem Taylor was seen going after the driver, and Jabar Taylor was captured stabbing a retreating Hughes.

Defense attorney Charles Cosby argued that Taylor wasn't looking for trouble that night and carried a knife only because he'd been beaten up previously by some football players.

He said Taylor, who was 15 at the time, was "overwhelmed" by the situation and reacted to seeing his brother being stomped.

"He wasn't looking for violence, violence found him," said Cosby, who added that his client was provoked by older and larger men and displayed "courage" in going to his brother's aid.

Prosecutor Travis Bird, who was getting sworn in as the new commonwealth's attorney in Spotsylvania when the verdict was announced, said Taylor's actions showed "cowardice," not courage.

"He turned a night of celebration into a night of tragedy and the jury rightly held him accountable," Bird said.

Bird added that the video clearly showed that the Taylors were the aggressors and that the slayings were unjustified.

"He brought a knife to a fistfight, all because he felt disrespected," Bird said.

Attorney Lawrence Drombetta also defended Taylor, and prosecutor Charizza Rodgers-Johnson worked with Bird.

Both Taylor and the victims had a number of supporters in the courtroom and security was much heavier than usual.

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