

EDITOR'S PICK

## Murder trial begins for Fredericksburg teen charged in fatal stabbings

Keith Epps

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**T**eenager Jabar Taylor was defending himself and his older brother when he fatally stabbed two people during a June 14 altercation outside a Fredericksburg restaurant, one of his lawyers said Wednesday.

Taylor was 15 when the incident erupted early that morning near the Cook Out in Greenbrier Shopping Center.

The altercation lasted less than 30 seconds, but by the time it was over 30-year-old Mac Oliver Hughes of Portsmouth and 28-year-old Anthony J. Carter of Albany, Ga. were dead and Jason Edward Fitch was wounded.

Taylor is charged with two counts of first-degree murder, aggravated malicious wounding and solicitation of a felony. Now 16, he is being tried as an adult and his trial began Wednesday in Fredericksburg Circuit Court.

Lawrence Drombetta, one of Taylor's attorneys, said in his opening statement that, "Jabar didn't set out to hurt anyone. He set out to get a milkshake."

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Drombetta told the jurors that a group of intoxicated men much larger than Taylor and his friends exchanged words with the younger group. Chaos ensued, Drombetta said, and Carter threw a punch at Taylor and chased him.

Drombetta said the 120-pound Taylor was outweighed by about 100 pounds.

The stabbings occurred, according to the defense, when Taylor saw his brother on the ground being stomped by three larger men.

“He acted in self-defense,” Drombetta said. “He and his brother were facing serious bodily harm.”

In his opening statement, prosecutor Travis Bird told a different story.

He said Taylor’s brother started the physical altercation by running up to the victim’s vehicle and trying to pull the driver out.

Bird said the older men tried to diffuse the situation, but the Taylors kept stirring it back up.

Bird told the jurors that a video will show Hughes backing away from Taylor and turning to run when he was stabbed in the heart.

Carter, who was stabbed twice, managed to run to Officer Rich Young in the parking lot to request help. He collapsed in front of the officer and died later that morning.

Fitch was stabbed four times, but survived. A group had gathered at Jay’s Lounge that night to celebrate Fitch’s birthday.

They were going to get some food about 2 a.m. at Cook Out when the fatal altercation occurred.

Bird described Taylor’s actions as a “cold, heartless thought-out murder” and said he showed no remorse in the aftermath.

Neither opening argument gave any indication what led to the fight. The trial is scheduled for two days.

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