

2TheAdvocate

Man acquitted in fatal '05 shooting at pool hall

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Jurors deliberated late into the night Friday before acquitting Khrissell "Coon" Tyler in a 2005 fatal shooting at Greenway Billiards.

Tyler stared forward as the jury verdict was read and family members wept, uttering muffled cries of joy behind him in the courtroom audience.

Tyler, 25, was on trial on a count of second-degree murder in the April 9, 2005, fatal shooting of 26-year-old Nolen Grey. Authorities claimed Tyler shot and killed Grey as he was leaving the pool hall.

Second-degree murder carries a mandatory life sentence.

Prosecutor Aaron Brooks told jurors during his closing argument Friday afternoon that this was a case about identification. Brooks also noted that Tyler has a large, V-shaped scar on the crown of his head.

But defense attorney Robbie Gill said after the verdict was read that he thinks jurors questioned whether the bouncers at the pool hall and the hall owner were correct when they identified Tyler as the shooter.

Gill said it wasn't until the day after the early morning shooting that the scar was mentioned.

The defense attorney also had harsh words for two officers with the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office, Jared Ruiz and Michael Compton, who he says concealed evidence.

One bouncer, James Burns, testified in court he could identify Tyler as the shooter. But when the officers showed Burns a photo lineup with Tyler's photo shortly after the shooting occurred, Burns could not pick out Tyler.

Gill said it was only during Burns' testimony that he learned a photo lineup had been shown to Burns.

"It didn't fit their case," Gill said of the previously undisclosed photo lineup. "I think that had to be huge" during jury deliberations.

During his closing argument, Gill looked at Ruiz, who was seated in the audience, and

said, “That’s how innocent people go to jail, Officer Ruiz.”

Prosecutor Aaron Brooks told jurors in his closing argument that the scar — five inches long and an inch wide — on Tyler’s head is so distinctive that he doubts anyone else in the world has a scar like that one. The uniqueness of the scar also makes the identifications reliable, Brooks said.

Brooks told jurors there was no DNA evidence and no gun. There was a bullet removed from the victim’s body, but authorities could not find the gun that fired the bullet.

The prosecutor also said Gill’s comment to the jury, during which he labeled Brooks as a “zealous prosecutor,” was a personal attack. Brooks told jurors Gill had embarked on a “Chicken Little defense” in which he claimed everyone is corrupt in an attempt to take the focus off Tyler.

“He wants to put everyone else on trial except for his client, with the scar,” Brooks said.

Brooks told jurors that Tyler is a “hot head” who got sucker-punched during a fight inside the bar. Tyler was not going to stand for that, so he got a gun and killed Grey, the prosecutor said.

Gill maintained that Tyler was outside the bar with his girlfriend when the shooting occurred and it was someone else who fired the shot that killed Grey.

Grey died after suffering a gunshot wound that pierced an arm and his heart.