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Willingboro man acquitted of Maple Shade motel murder - News - Burlington County Times

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MOUNT HOLLY A Superior Court jury acquitted a Willingboro man of all charges in the motel murder of a Beverly man four years ago.

Isiah Williams, 32, was ordered released from Burlington County Jail after Superior Court Judge Delehey received the verdict Friday. Williams had been held on \$350,000 bail since his arrest June 4, 2008, in the parking lot of a Maple Shade motel.

He was charged with murder, possession of a weapon for an unlawful purpose and possession of a weapon by a previously convicted person in the shooting death of Antwan Plowden, 28, at the Motel 6 on Route 73.

The jury of nine women and three men deliberated about seven hours over two days before reaching its unanimous verdict that will now set Williams free. If convicted, he faced 30 or more years in state prison.

Thank God for the jury system, defense attorney Robin Lord said. We're delighted that Mr. Williams can put this behind him and move on with his life. He has been incarcerated for four years for a crime he did not commit. Unfortunately, he had to wait four years to be

exonerated and that's time he will never get back.

Authorities alleged Williams gunned down Plowden in Room 361 of the Motel 6 on June 4, 2008. Plowden's girlfriend told the jury the men were hanging out and laughing one minute and struggling over a gun the next. Both were smoking wet, which is marijuana laced with PCP and embalming fluid before the alleged fight.

The eyewitness didn't see the shooting begin or what motivated it. She hid in the bathroom as shots were fired and when she came out Plowden was slumped on the floor dead from multiple gunshot wounds. Williams was gone, the witness testified. Plowden's body was found over a bag with crack cocaine and his girlfriend testified he was a drug dealer in Camden, but was not armed or selling drugs or guns out of the motel.

Williams was apprehended moments later as he ran naked in the nearby Bel-Air Motel parking lot. Jurors watched surveillance video of him shedding his clothes as he fled. Evidence included DNA and Williams partial palm print in Plowden's blood on the staircase of the Motel 6, but it proved not enough to convict.

The defense argued the case was built on an incomplete police investigation and the words of an unreliable and untrustworthy eyewitness who gave varying stories to authorities about what happened in the room the night of the murder.

In one account, the witness portrayed Plowden as the aggressor, on top of Williams in the struggle. She also said another man was in the room and when questioned whether he in fact was the shooter said she didn't know.

Lord outlined 16 points where the jury could find reasonable doubt in the state's case, telling the panel investigators didn't look beyond

the naked man in the motel parking lot for suspects. Two other men, including the one who was reportedly in the motel at the time of the shooting, were stopped as they were trying to flee the scene, but never charged with the crime.

Both the Williams and Plowden families attended nearly every day of the three week trial conducted under tight security at the county courthouse as alleged threats had been made to parties involved.

Williams appeared visibly relieved when the verdict was read and hugged Lord as he left the courtroom.

Williams wife and four children and other family celebrated in the lobby, hugging and crying. It's been four long years and I'm just happy that it's over, wife Sajidah Williams said. He was just patient and always knew that justice would prevail.

Both Williams and Plowden had served time in state prisons for drug convictions, according to state Department of Corrections records.

Williams was convicted of distributing drugs near a school in Burlington County in May 2004. He also has convictions for drug possession, hindering and aggravated assault offenses that occurred in Camden County in 2004 and 2005, according to the state Department of Corrections. He was released from prison just three months before the shooting of Plowden, according to records.

The jury didn't learn that Williams had a previous record before acquitting him of the murder.

It then was presented evidence on the certain person prohibited from possessing a gun charged and spent about three hours deliberating before returning a not guilty verdict.

Plowden served three separate stints in prisons for manufacturing and distributing drugs in Camden County. He was last released from prison in May 2005, according to Corrections records.