



Wade sentenced to 20 years

Former ASU football player convicted of second-degree murder

by Matt Stone

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Former ASU football player Loren Wade was sentenced to 20 years in prison Friday for the 2005 killing of Brandon Falkner.

Judge Arthur Anderson handed down the sentence more than two months after Wade, 23, was found guilty of the second-degree murder of Falkner, another former ASU football player.

During the nine-day trial, the jury was asked to decide whether Wade had intended to shoot Falkner following an altercation outside a Scottsdale nightclub.

On March 26, 2005, Wade drove to CNBC, a Scottsdale nightclub, to meet then-girlfriend Haley Van Blommestein. After seeing Van Blommestein with Falkner and his friends, Wade hit Falkner in the face with a gun before it went off.

The jury couldn't reach an agreement on whether Wade was guilty of first-degree murder, which by Arizona law is defined as an intentional and premeditated attack.

But the jury did find Wade guilty of the lesser, second-degree charge and several aggravating factors, which held a maximum sentence of 22 years in prison.

The jury had previously recommended a sentence of at least 16 years.

In such a case, various aggravating factors were considered following the trial, including a history of violence in the defendant's past, the use of a gun to commit the crime and significant emotional harm inflicted on the victim's family.

"I miss him," a tearful Jelani Falkner said of brother Brandon Falkner during the aggravating factors trial. "I miss him everyday. He was my only brother and my best friend."

Throughout the trial, Wade's defense attorney Ulises Ferragut argued that Wade didn't intend to shoot Brandon Falkner.

With the help of witnesses, Ferragut tried to prove that Wade suffered a "reflexive squeeze," which could cause an inadvertent pulling of a trigger.

"One thing is clear in this case — Loren Wade was upset," Ferragut said during his closing statement in June. "He acted recklessly."

Through a series of witnesses that included former girlfriends and friends, prosecutor Juan Martinez tried to prove that Wade's actions were caused by nothing more than a violent nature.

"The defendant had killing on his mind that night," Martinez said in his closing statement. "As that defenseless young man sat in that car, [Wade] executed him."
Wade never took the stand in his defense.

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