

# The young killer of an 11-year-old Alton child found guilty of first-degree murder

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April 25 2017 4:35 PM



**EDWARDSVILLE** - Eleven-year-old Romell Jones was murdered by a drive-by shooting early in 2016.

While the event is marked as a horrific tragedy in the minds of every Altonian who remembers it, justice for Jones was fulfilled this morning in the Madison County Courthouse when 19-year-old Ta'Mon F. Ford was found guilty of two counts of first-

degree murder - a Class M Felony. Ford was charged with shooting Ford accidentally during a drive-by near the Alton Acres Youth Center on Jan. 14, 2016 just after 5:15 p. m. Jones was pronounced dead at OSF St. Anthony's Health Center shortly after being shot.

The shooting was a result of some social media disputes between Ford and several other individuals, at least two of whom were at the scene of the shooting during the drive-by, according to the investigation conducted by the Major Case Squad, who was called to assist in the investigation by the Alton Police Department. A release sent from Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons, it is believed by police Ford wanted to confront some of those individuals regarding that dispute, with which Jones had no connection.

Witnesses reported a man firing a gun from a red vehicle before leaving the scene, the release stated. Investigators determined Ford fired the fatal shots from his 9mm handgun from the roof of a 1999 Oldsmobile Alero sedan.

Following a two-day bench trial, Ford was found guilty by Associate Judge Neil Schroeder, who returned the guilty verdict Wednesday afternoon. Until his sentencing by Schroeder, Ford will remain in the custody of the Madison County Jail. Sentencing is expected within the next two months, after the completion of a pre-sentencing investigation. According to the release from Gibbons, sentencing for first degree murder ranges between 20-60 years, but, because of the use of a firearm, Ford is eligible for an additional 25-year sentence. Ford will be forced to serve 100 percent of that sentence.

Gibbons praised the work of both the Major Case Squad and the Alton Police Department in the release, as well as the work of Assistant State's Attorneys Crystal Uhe and Lauren Heischmidt of the Violent Crimes Unit for "their tireless work that went into solving the case."