

# **Madison County jury convicts Madison County man for shooting and killing of Alton man**

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A Madison County jury convicted a local man today for the shooting and killing of an Alton man in February 2014 following a week-long jury trial at the Madison County Criminal Justice Center.



Jury selection began on Monday afternoon in the case against Justin D. Vaughn (d.o.b. 02/05/1990) who was charged by the Madison County State's Attorney's Office with shooting Demetrius C. Lucas, 30, at the Storey Manor Apartment complex in Cottage Hills. The case went to the jury at about 10:15 a.m. this morning following closing arguments. After less than 90 minutes of deliberation, they returned guilty verdicts on First Degree Murder and Unlawful Possession of Weapons by a Felon charges.

Officers from the Alton Police Department responded to the apartment complex following a report of shots fired at approximately 10:00 p.m. on the evening of February 5, 2014. They determined that there had been a shooting and that the victim, Lucas, had been taken to Alton Memorial Hospital before their arrival. Lucas, who had been shot twice, was transferred to a St. Louis-area hospital shortly thereafter and pronounced dead approximately an hour later. Vaughn, who lived in the apartment complex, was taken into custody around 2:30 a.m. on February 6, 2014. The investigation determined that the men got into an argument during a dice game at a birthday party for Vaughn that escalated into the shooting death of Lucas.

Assistant State's Attorneys Crystal Uhe and Rachelle Crowe, of the Violent Crimes Unit of the State's Attorney's Office, began presenting evidence to the jury on Tuesday which supported the state's case that Vaughn deliberately shot Lucas rather than as an act of self-defense as claimed by Vaughn's defense attorneys. On Thursday afternoon, Circuit Judge Richard Tognarelli denied a motion by the defense that would have allowed jurors to consider self-defense in their deliberations. Assistant State's Attorneys Uhe and Crowe asked the jury to convict Vaughn on one count of First Degree Murder (Class M Felony) and one count of Unlawful Possession of Weapons by a Felon (Class 2 Felony). Vaughn had previous felony convictions from 2011 on Mob Action and Unlawful Restraint.

State's Attorney Tom Gibbons thanked his prosecutors and the entire trial team for their work in putting together a successful prosecution along with officers from the Alton Police Department who quickly identified and arrested Vaughn following the murder of Lucas. "This was a dispute that turned violent in the worst way," said State's Attorney Gibbons. "I hope that this guilty verdict helps restore justice for our entire community, and also serves as a message that we will not allow acts of violence such as this to prevail." Gibbons offered his condolences to the victim's family. "I am hopeful that this verdict provides the family with some comfort and closure on this tragic chapter in their lives." State's Attorney Gibbons also thanked the jury for their work in the case as well as the medical personnel, the Madison County Coroner's office and all other witnesses who contributed to the successful verdict.

Vaughn will remain in custody at the Madison County Jail in Edwardsville where he has been held without bond pending sentencing by Judge Tognarelli. Sentencing will occur

following the completion of a pre-sentencing investigation that usually takes 6-8 weeks. The murder conviction carries a minimum of 20 years in prison. In addition, since he used a firearm, he is eligible for an additional 25-year sentence, guaranteeing a minimum 45- year sentence. Due to previous felony convictions, he could also be sentenced to life in prison. Maximum penalty for a Class 2 Felony is 3-7 years in prison.