

NEWS RELEASE

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Violent felons tried, others plead guilty; Sept. 28 - Oct. 24, 2009

The week of September 28, 2009, the Crimes Against Persons Team conducted jury trials in two courtrooms:

The Honorable James W. Morgan, Superior Court Judge, presided over courtroom 5150. The State tried Willie Roberts, age 56, for 1) two counts of first-degree rape, 2) first-degree kidnapping, and 3) robbery with a dangerous weapon. The jury found Roberts guilty of the lesser-included offense of second-degree rape, and guilty as charged of first-degree kidnapping and robbery with a dangerous weapon.. Judge Morgan sentenced Roberts to a total of 150 years in prison.* These were Roberts' third and fourth convictions for rape.

The Honorable Beverly T. Beal, Superior Court Judge, presided over courtroom 5130. The State tried both Michael Mahol and Marcus Watkins, ages 19, each for two counts of robbery with a dangerous weapon. The jury found both defendants guilty of two counts of common law robbery. Judge Beal sentenced both defendants. Mahol was sentenced to 13-16 months in prison; upon his release, Mahol will have an additional 12-15 month sentence that will be suspended while he completes 36 months of supervised probation. Watkins was sentenced to 12-15 months in prison; upon his release, Watkins will have an additional 12-15 month sentence that will be suspended while he completes 36 months of supervised probation.

The week of October 5, 2009, the Crimes Against Persons Team conducted a jury trial in courtroom 5130 before The Honorable Calvin E. Murphy, Superior Court Judge. The State called for trial two 20-year olds - Blake Odom and Yoan Tosca - each for 1) robbery with a dangerous weapon and 2) conspiracy to commit robbery with a dangerous weapon. Tosca pled guilty as charged and received 38-51 months in prison. The jury found Odom guilty as charged and Odom received 77-102 months in prison.

For three days from October 12 to October 14 in administrative courtroom 5310 the Crimes Against Persons Team took nine guilty pleas for violent felonies. Among them was Oscar Escobar who pled guilty to six counts of robbery with a dangerous weapon. The Honorable Robert C. Ervin, Superior Court Judge, sentenced him to 76-110 months in prison.**

**The sentence of 150 years was not derived from the current structured sentencing laws because this was an 1987 cold case and the law requires Roberts to be sentenced under the sentencing laws that existed at the time that he committed the offense.*

***Escobar was a juvenile at the time of the offense and his case was transferred to Superior Court (whereby he could be prosecuted as an adult) upon a successful motion and argument from the District Attorney's Juvenile Prosecution Team in juvenile court (see N.C.G.S. 7B-2203).*

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