

Jordan Bratton free to 'knock them dead' in comedy routine
By Maddy Starr

Although she could have easily been telling her jokes in prison, comedian Jordan Bratton was ruled not guilty by a unanimous jury.

Bratton hired a skilled team, as they won both the trial and pretrial motion, although her attorneys had their hands full with the prosecution's arguments and evidence.

On the night of April 13, 2009, entertainment critic Preston Palmer was strangled on his driveway in Hollyville. Bratton was tried for first degree murder of Palmer.

On March 31, Palmer attended one of Bratton's shows, and a "hateful" review of the performance was posted on YellUp, a review site. Bratton's career took a drastic turn for the worse after the review and, on the night of the murder, she posted a tweet stating "I am going to kill tonight and shut up the critics once and for all."

Detective Kendal Malone was the first on the scene of the murder, and he testified for the state about the evidence he found there. Behind Palmer's home, Malone found tire tracks that were later matched to Bratton's car. Malone then obtained a search warrant for Bratton's home and car.

In the car, there was a pack of brown cotton gloves in the trunk, along with a Sony FV 100 microphone cord. Both were given to Hollyville's chief medical examiner-coroner, Dr. Casey Scott, to be compared to evidence from the crime scene and body.

After an on-scene analysis of Palmer's body, Dr. Scott found that the marks on the neck were made by a smooth, flexible cord, matching the Sony FV 100's characteristics. Underneath the victim's fingernails were brown cotton fibers. Although cotton and the dye used are extremely common, as pointed out by the defense's pathologist, the fibers matched Bratton's gloves in coarseness and shape.

Dr. Peyton Flenderson was hired by Bratton's attorneys to examine the body of Palmer. She agreed with Dr. Scott on time and cause of death, as well as that bleach could have been used to remove traces of DNA on the cord.

However, she disagreed on three key items: first, the killer could have fit into a broader height range than Dr. Scott found; second, the killer, unlike Bratton, could have been right handed; and third, the gloves are useless for evidence considering the dye and fabric are common.

Prosecution also called to the stand Taylor Hudson, a waiter at Palmer's favorite café, the Hollyville Coffee Shop. Hudson testified to seeing Bratton's car follow Palmer out of the parking lot around twenty-five minutes before Palmer's death.

Ryan Howard, another prosecution witness, is the manager and owner of Hollyville Comedy Club, the club that Bratton performed at on March 31. Howard wanted to sell his club, but all potential buyers backed out after the sour review affected the club's business.

The defense brought Morgan Bernard, the neighbor of Palmer who discovered the body during her nightly jog, to the stand. She testified to having seen nothing suspicious that night, but the neighborhood has two entrances. Bernard has lived in the neighborhood for a few years, and has been awakened by many victims of Palmer's reviews seeking him.

Bratton's close friend and fellow comedian, Dani Levinson, testified for the defense about the Twitter post on the night of the murder. Levinson claimed that, in the comedy world, "kill" means to impress the audience.

The final witness was the defendant. Bratton claimed that, on April 12, she innocently pulled over on the side of the road to check her calendar, and this created the tire tracks behind Palmer's home.

Bratton also claimed to be at a comedy club for an open mic night at the time of the murder, but no one else could verify her whereabouts that evening.

During closing arguments, the prosecution stressed means, motive, and opportunity. They claimed that all of the evidence is clearly there, from Bratton fitting the description of the killer to her predicting the murder on her Twitter.

However, defense mentioned that there are too many variables in this case, and so the prosecution had not proved beyond a reasonable doubt that Bratton was guilty, and the jury clearly agreed.