

Man, 29, found guilty of murder, 6 other charges

Jury deliberated less than 3 hours before returning verdicts

BLADE STAFF

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BOWLING GREEN — A jury in Wood County Common Pleas Court today rejected a Woodville man's account of being “out of his mind” when he drove into a railroad construction crew in 2013 — killing one man and injuring two others.

Cody Rickard, 29, was found guilty today of murder and two counts each of aggravated vehicular homicide, vehicular assault, and felonious assault for the Oct. 28, 2013, crash near Bradner that killed Paul Castle, 34, of Paintsville, Ky., and injured Jim Conley, 58, of Findlay and Luis Knott III, 58, of Banner, Ky.

The jury deliberated less than three hours before returning its verdicts against Rickard, who took the stand in his defense this morning. He had pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity.

Wood County Common Pleas Judge Alan Mayberry immediately sentenced Rickard to life in prison with parole eligibility after 29 years.

It was the same sentence Judge Mayberry imposed in 2014 when Rickard was found guilty of the same charges.

He was granted a new trial last year by Ohio's 6th District Court of Appeals, which concluded that Rickard's original defense attorney failed to investigate his client's mental state at the time and did not even seek an evaluation to determine if he was competent to stand trial.

Driver is found guilty of murder in 2nd trial

Jury rejects his insanity defense

By [Jennifer Feehan](#) | BLADE STAFF WRITER

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BOWLING GREEN — Clutching a pendant with her son Paul's picture on it, Vickie Castle left Wood County Common Pleas Court on Thursday knowing that the motorist who struck and killed her son in 2013 was going to prison for life.

“I say Ohio is just a safer place now with the verdict,” Mrs. Castle said.

A jury deliberated less than three hours Thursday afternoon before returning guilty verdicts on murder and six other counts against Cody Rickard, 29, of Woodville for driving into a CSX Transportation crew near Bradner. Mr. Castle, 34, of Paintsville, Ky., was killed, while Jim Conley, 58, of Findlay and Luis Knott III, 58, of Banner, Ky., were injured.

It was Rickard's second trial on the charges — his 2014 conviction was reversed by an appeals court last year — and for the second time, Judge Alan Mayberry sentenced him to life in prison with parole eligibility after he serves 29 years.

Rickard, who had pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity, cried and shook his head no as the judge read the guilty verdicts for murder and two counts each of aggravated vehicular homicide, vehicular assault, and felonious assault.

The jury rejected Rickard's account of being out of his mind when he drove around a "Road Closed" sign, closed his eyes, and floored the accelerator the morning of Oct. 28, 2013.

He took the stand in his defense Thursday morning recounting how he'd been in a hypersensitive and delusional state for about two weeks after taking acid and ketamine at a friend's suggestion.

Rickard claimed to have rejected tests thrown at him by Satan and come to realize that God was real. After the crash he said he did not see the construction site or barricades. He said he climbed out of his passenger side window filled with joy.

"I was just happy. I'm jumping around," Rickard said. "It was like God put his hands around me and protected me. It was just like I passed his test. I had faith in him. It was like he delivered me."

While there was no dispute that Rickard was driving the car that struck the workers, the question for the jury, said defense attorney Scott Hicks, was what was going on in Rickard's head at the time.

"It may be bizarre. It may be hard to believe," Mr. Hicks told the jury in his closing argument, adding, "I wish this was black and white for you."

Toxicology reports from a blood sample taken the day of the crash proved negative for alcohol and other drugs, Robert Forney, chief toxicologist for the Lucas County Coroner's Office, testified Thursday.

Gwen Howe-Gebers, a former assistant county prosecutor who now serves as Henry County prosecutor, told the jury Rickard could not be believed, that he knew what he was doing when he blew through a barricade and sped toward the work crew at more than 60 mph.

Rickard was granted a second trial last year when Ohio's 6th District Court of Appeals concluded that his original defense attorney failed to investigate his client's mental state at the time and did not even seek an evaluation to determine if he was competent to stand trial.

This time around, three different mental health professionals testified that they'd evaluated Rickard, but only one told the jury he was convinced Rickard met the legal threshold for insanity — that he was suffering from such a severe mental defect or disease at the time of the offense that he did not know the wrongfulness of his actions.