

NEWS RELEASE

R. Andrew Murray
District Attorney

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Drug Team convicts 5 defendants during trial week

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Drug Prosecution Team convicted five defendants during the week of February 25-March 1, 2013, in Mecklenburg County Superior Court. The proceedings were held before The Honorable Hugh B. Lewis and The Honorable C. Thomas Edwards, Superior Court Judges.

Ricardo Leeper, 58, was tried for 1) possession with intent to sell or deliver cocaine and 2) possession of drug paraphernalia. The jury returned verdicts of *guilty* for 1) the lesser included offense of possession of cocaine and 2) possession of drug paraphernalia. Judge Edwards sentenced Leeper to 12 months of supervised probation. In December 2011, an off-duty detective observed Leeper holding what he believed to be cocaine and involved in a drug transaction at a gas station on Mt. Holly-Huntersville Road in Charlotte. The detective called for a marked police car to stop Leeper's car as he drove out of the gas station parking lot. Leeper gave consent for the police to search his car, and officers found 12.46 grams of cocaine on the passenger seat.

Brandon Clark, 24, was tried for 1) three counts of sale of marijuana and 2) three counts of possession with intent to sell or deliver marijuana. The jury returned verdicts of *not guilty* on all counts.

Four defendants pled guilty before their cases were called for trial:

Ronald Murchinson, 32, pled guilty to possession with intent to sell or deliver cocaine. Judge Lewis sentenced Murchinson to 10-12 months in prison.

Michael Morrison, 45, filed a motion to suppress evidence seized by law enforcement, alleging violations of his legal rights. After hearing testimony and arguments from the defense and the Assistant District Attorney, Judge Edwards denied the defendant's motion. The defendant then pled guilty to possession with intent to sell or deliver cocaine. Judge Edwards sentenced Morrison to 6-8 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 24 months of supervised probation.

Cedric Smith, 23, pled guilty to 1) sale of marijuana, 2) delivery of marijuana, and 3) possession with intent to sell or deliver marijuana. Judge Edwards sentenced Smith to 5-15 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 18 months of supervised probation.

Jonathan Brown, 33, pled guilty to 1) felony possession of marijuana and 2) possession with intent to sell or deliver marijuana. Judge Edwards sentenced Brown to 6-8 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 18 months of supervised probation.

One defendant, whose name is being withheld because his charge of possession of cocaine is still pending, filed a motion for a speedy trial. After hearing arguments from the defense and the Assistant District Attorney, Judge Lewis denied the defendant's motion. The trial has been scheduled for a future date.

Note: For more information about the District Attorney's Office, visit www.charmeckda.com. For updates and other information, "like" the DA's Office on Facebook at www.facebook.com/charmeckda and follow us on Twitter: @CharMeckDA

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