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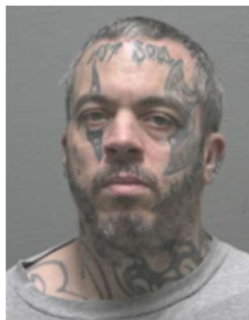
Johnson Guilty of First Degree Murder in 2024 Stabbing

The trial of the suspect charged in the brutal 2024 stabbing death of a Carolina Beach man concluded on Wednesday. A New Hanover County jury found James Arthur Johnson, age 43, guilty of First Degree Murder following four days of testimony and deliberations. He will serve the remainder of his life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Johnson met a woman leaving the Carolina Beach boardwalk in the early morning hours of July 4th and agreed to walk her home. It was on that walk that the two encountered the victim, Dakota Capes, who decided to go with them. Once back at the apartment, testimony showed that the group consumed alcohol and drugs while listening to music. The woman testified that there was no hostility amongst the three of them until she saw Johnson holding a large knife and staring at Capes. She stated that an unarmed Capes urged Johnson not to do anything stupid with knife before she fled the apartment in fear. Witnesses observed the defendant walking out of the apartment complex soon thereafter. Capes was found deceased in the doorway of the apartment suffering from more than 60 stab wounds.

Johnson was captured on video minutes later trying to break into a vehicle at another apartment complex. Officers apprehended him as he walked away from that complex and noticed that he was covered in blood but otherwise uninjured. DNA testing later showed that all of the blood found on Johnson, along with numerous areas of blood found throughout the crime scene, belonged to Capes. Additionally, detectives located several knives inside the apartment where Capes was killed. Two of them were covered in Capes' blood and one had Johnson's palm prints on the handle. Johnson's DNA was also found on a cigarette butt in the kitchen and on underwear found in the master bathroom where he showered.

When Johnson was interviewed by detectives, he denied being at the crime scene and claimed that he had not killed anyone. At trial, however, he admitted that he had killed Capes but testified that he acted in self-defense and was too impaired to be convicted of first-degree murder. The jury did not agree.



James Johnson