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## Regional AP

Posted on Mon, Dec. 03, 2007

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### Supreme Court refuses to hear Edmonds appeal in murder case

By SHELIA BYRD  
 Associated Press Writer

**JACKSON, Miss.** --When teenager Tyler Edmonds returns to a courtroom early next year to be retried for the murder of his brother-in-law, prosecutors could use his disputed confession against him.

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday rejected Edmonds' argument that he was coerced into confessing to the 2003 slaying of Joey Fulgham.

The Mississippi Supreme Court overturned Edmonds' capital murder conviction earlier this year and a new trial was ordered. The matter before the U.S. Supreme Court was Edmonds' request to overturn the Mississippi court ruling that allows his confession to be used against him. The confession was made when he was 13.

The justices did not comment on their decision not to hear Edmonds' case.

"We were hopeful because if they had taken it and found it inadmissible, then it wouldn't have been a retrial in all probability," Jim Waide, a Tupelo attorney representing Edmonds, said Monday.

"What I believe is that at some point, if the Mississippi Supreme Court upholds the confession, then the U.S. Supreme Court will hear the case. There are some issues that should be heard," said Waide.

Edmonds' second trial has been scheduled for Feb. 4 in Oktibbeha County Circuit Court. He will be tried on a murder charge.

His case drew national headlines, mostly because of his age at the time he was accused of the crime. Edmonds, now 17, has been in school and working since he was released on bond, said Waide.

Authorities say Joey Fulgham was shot in the head in 2003 as he slept in his home near Starkville. Prosecutors believe robbery was the motive and that Kristi Fulgham wanted her husband dead after she left him for another man. They say she enlisted the help of her younger brother.

Waide has said that the confession "is really the only evidence" against Edmonds. In reversing Edmonds' conviction, the Supreme Court cited discrepancies in testimony. Justices also said Edmonds didn't get a fair trial.

Assistant District Attorney Frank Clark wouldn't comment on Monday about the evidence against Edmonds.

"There's been so much said in the press on behalf of this defendant and we've stayed quiet and are not going to try this case in the press. We look forward to telling our side of the story," said Clark.

According to court records, Edmonds' confession came after the Oktibbeha County sheriff barred Edmonds' mother, Sharon Clay, from the room while her son was questioned.

Also, the sheriff brought Kristi Fulgham, who is Edmonds' sister and Joey Fulgham's wife, into the room to help convince Edmonds to admit to participating in the murder. Edmonds has claimed his sister tricked him into confessing.

Kristi Fulgham was convicted of capital murder in December and is awaiting execution, though her conviction will be automatically appealed.

Dorsey R. Carson Jr., an attorney for Joey Fulgham's family, was hopeful Monday's Supreme Court ruling will lead Edmonds' defense attorneys to consider a plea deal.

"This has been a tragedy for all involved, and the Fulgham family has from the outset supported a reasonable plea arrangement with Mr. Edmonds so that they would not have to endure these numerous appeals..." Carson said in an email to The Associated Press.

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