

# Jury finds man guilty of 2002 murder

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FORT PIERCE — Jurors late Wednesday found Andrew Michael Gosciminski guilty of murder charges in connection with the 2002 bludgeoning death of a woman on Hutchinson Island just south of Fort Pierce.

The jury, who returned the verdict at 11 p.m., also convicted Gosciminski on robbery and burglary counts connected to the case.



Andrew Michael Gosciminski

A penalty phase in the trial begins today. Jurors could recommend Gosciminski spend life in prison or face the death penalty, but

Circuit Judge Robert Belanger will ultimately hand down the sentence.

Prosecutors said Gosciminski bludgeoned and stabbed Joan Loughman to death to steal her jewelry, including a 2-carat diamond ring he allegedly later gave to his girlfriend. Gosciminski met Loughman after the Connecticut native traveled to Florida to move her father into Lyford Cove, an assisted-living facility where Gosciminski worked as a marketing director.

Jurors in Gosciminski's first trial in 2005 convicted him of murder and voted 9-3 in favor of the death penalty. But the Florida Supreme Court overturned the conviction and death sentence after it ruled that the first jury had heard details that should have been inadmissible in court.

Gosciminski's second trial ended Wednesday after nearly two weeks of testimony. Gosciminski did not take the stand as he had during the first trial, but jurors heard his previous testimony as well as statements he made to investigators.

In their last words to jurors Wednesday, Assistant State Attorneys Chris Taylor and Lynn Park described Gosciminski as a man who killed Loughman because it was his last chance to rob her before she returned to Connecticut.

"He knew he could not go there, take her jewelry and leave her alive," Park said.

Loughman's sister told investigators that she and Loughman were on the phone on the morning of the murder when Loughman abruptly ended the phone call, saying someone was at the door.

Prosecutors say Gosciminski was the one at the door. But Assistant Public Defender Mark Harlee told jurors Wednesday that it likely could have been Ben Thomas, a married man who was also dating Gosciminski's girlfriend, Debra Thomas.

Thomas told investigators that at some point after the murder, she saw Gosciminski washing what appeared to be blood off his body, but Harlee suggested to jurors that she lied to investigators throughout the case. He said the evidence against Gosciminski was circumstantial.

"Yes he may have been obnoxious, yes he may talk too much, but those two attributes does not a killer make," Harlee said.