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Trial in shooting ends in hung jury

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HAMILTON – A jury labored long and hard but was unable to decide whether Bruce Suggs Jr. of Mason played any part in helping a gunman who fired at police, then killed himself.

After a dozen hours of deliberations that began Thursday afternoon, jurors on Friday evening found Suggs guilty of two weapons charges, but told Butler County Common Pleas Judge Craig Hedric that they were deadlocked on the three most serious charges that stemmed from a March 9 shootout with police.

Suggs, though armed, was not the gunman who fired at police, but he was accused of aiding and abetting the gunman.

Prosecutors intend



Suggs

to try again for a conviction on those three charges: two counts of complicity to felonious assault and a charge of tampering with evidence.

Suggs' lawyer, Clyde Bennett, said his client should not have to face a retrial. Bennett said that the verdict, though split, was "a huge victory for the defense" because Suggs had faced a minimum of 22 years in prison on the charges that hung the jury.

By contrast, the two convictions on carrying a concealed weapon and mishandling a firearm carry a maximum of 18 months in prison, Bennett said, and there is a good chance Suggs could get probation because the charges are lower-level felonies and Suggs has no criminal record.

Suggs was a back-seat passenger in a vehicle that police stopped; front-seat passenger Matthew Hutchinson refused to give his ID and opened fire. Hutchinson wounded two West Chester Township police officers and shot at but missed a Sharonville officer before killing himself.

The car's driver, John W. Brochu of Deerfield Township, is jailed on similar charges and faces trial Aug. 27 in Common Pleas Court.

One of the wounded officers, Jeff Duma, left the courtroom without comment but appeared frustrated with the trial's outcome. Suggs bit his lip and dropped his head.

Hedric told jurors that they had performed their duty diligently. Among all the complicated legal instructions he gave them, "you never heard one instruction that said this was going to be an easy job," Hedric said.

A date for Suggs' retrial has not been set.

He was returned to jail to await sentencing on the weapons charges.