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Trenton Man Sentenced to 65 Years in State Prison for August 2021 Homicide

Mercer County Prosecutor Janetta D. MarbreY announced that a Trenton man was sentenced to 65 years in state prison for the August 2021 shooting death of Daquan Basnight.

On August 13, 2025, Matthew Tanner, 40, was sentenced by Mercer County Superior Court Judge Darlene J. Pereksta to an aggregate term of 65 years in prison. He must serve 85 percent of that sentence before he is parole eligible.

An investigation conducted by the Mercer County Homicide Task Force and the Trenton Police Department revealed that on July 31, 2021, members of the Trenton community were in the 800 block of Stuyvesant Avenue celebrating "Sha-Day," an annual party in memory of a Trenton resident who was killed in 2013. The party continued into the early morning of August 1, until Trenton police responded to the area at approximately 12:24 a.m. for a ShotSpotter activation of 13 rounds and reports of a male who was shot. Responding officers located Daquan Basnight lying motionless in the street, suffering from multiple gunshot wounds to his face and body. He was pronounced dead at the scene shortly after.

The Mercer County Homicide Task Force canvassed the scene for evidence and recovered 13 spent shell casings around the victim's body and surveillance footage from a nearby business that captured portions of the shooting in progress. The surveillance footage showed that Basnight was ambushed from behind by a lone gunman who was hiding in a shortcut between 813 and 825 Stuyvesant Avenue. The suspect fired multiple shots at the victim, then fled into the same shortcut toward Craft Alley, which runs directly behind the homes on the 800 block of Stuyvesant Avenue. The suspect was identified as a black male, wearing a plain black t-shirt, all black pants,

a light-colored strip of fabric between the back of the shirt and pants, and white/reflective sneakers with a black tongue area. Approximately seven minutes prior to the shooting, the defendant, Matthew Tanner, was identified by an HTF detective walking to the murder location, wearing what appeared to be the same clothes as the shooter.

Tanner was charged with Basnight's murder in August 2021 and interviewed at the prosecutor's office by the lead investigator, Detective Shawn Bruton. Tanner arrived in the same clothes he wore at the time of Basnight's murder. The defendant identified himself in numerous screenshots from the surveillance footage before and after the murder standing around the victim's body with a crowd of people. The defendant also identified himself standing next to Basnight's body three seconds after the last shot was fired.

In April 2025, Mercer County Assistant Prosecutors Michael Mennuti and Matthew Samel represented the state during a four-week trial before Judge Pereksta. The evidence and testimony presented at trial established that Tanner left the party at 835 Stuyvesant Avenue to shower and change at 112 Hoffman Avenue, then returned to the party minutes before the murder wearing an outfit matching the shooter's. The defendant observed Basnight walking away from the party, then used shortcuts between homes and Craft Alley to ambush the victim from behind, then flee back to the area of the party. Tanner was convicted on all counts of the indictment, including one count of first-degree murder, one count of second-degree possession of a firearm for an unlawful purpose, one count of second-degree unlawful possession of a handgun and one count of second-degree certain persons not to possess a firearm.

The defendant was represented by Nicole Carlo and Mary-Clare Patterson of the New Jersey Office of the Public Defender.

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Matthew Tanner