

Former youth prison administrator found guilty of sexually abusing teen inmate

By Alicia A. Caldwell, The Associated Press

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ODESSA - A former Texas youth prison administrator was found guilty Thursday of sexually abusing a teenage inmate more than five years ago in a case that ignited a statewide scandal over the treatment of young offenders.

Ray Edward Brookins was convicted of two counts each of having improper sexual activity with a person in custody and having an improper relationship between an educator and student.

Brookins, a former assistant superintendent of the Texas Youth Commission's West Texas State School in Pyote, was immediately taken into custody and the sentencing phase of the trial began Thursday afternoon. Testimony is expected to continue today. He could face up to 20 years in prison.

Brookins is one of two former school administrators accused of sexually abusing teenage inmates. Several top agency officials have resigned, and former principal John Paul Hernandez awaits trial.

In all, authorities believe at least 13 boys were sexually abused. The case led to accusations of a cover-up and reports exposing lax medical care, youth beatings and a culture of retaliation against whistle blowers. Lawmakers eventually ordered an overhaul of the system.

Brookins' attorneys called no witnesses and rested their case Thursday morning immediately after prosecutors rested their case.

The jury of seven men and five women first reported being divided 10-2, but the judge ordered jurors to continue deliberating, and they reached a verdict after about three hours.

The former inmate testified that Brookins molested him at night in his office. He said Brookins performed sexual acts on him while displaying pornography. He isn't being named because The Associated Press generally does not identify victims of sexual abuse.

Texas Rangers Lt. Brian Burzynski, who investigated the case, testified Thursday that Brookins and Hernandez summoned inmates from their dorms late at night to vacant conference rooms, offices and ball fields for sex over a span of at least two years.

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