

Florida high court upholds conviction, death sentence of Deltona mass murder figure

By JIM SAUNDERS
TALLAHASSEE BUREAU CHIEF

TALLAHASSEE -- The Florida Supreme Court today upheld the convictions and death sentences of Jerone Hunter, who was sent to Death Row for the 2004 slayings of six people in a Deltona home.

Hunter The 6-1 decision was the first time justices have ruled on a case involving the grisly murders that drew national attention.

Hunter argued, in part, that he should have been tried separately from co-defendants Troy Victorino and Michael Salas. But justices rejected that and other arguments.

Only Justice Harry Lee Anstead dissented because of concerns about the way Hunter's appellate attorney handled the case.

The Aug. 6, 2004, slayings became widely known as the "Xbox murders" because they stemmed from a dispute about video-game systems taken from a home where Victorino had been living as a squatter.

The victims, who were beaten with aluminum baseball bats, were Erin Belanger, 22; Jonathan Gleason, 17; Michelle Nathan, 19; Roberto "Tito" Gonzalez, 28; Francisco "Flaco" Ayo-Roman, 30; and Anthony Vega, 34.

Hunter, who was 18 at the time of the murders, was convicted on six counts of first-degree murder. Circuit Judge William Parsons sentenced him to death in September 2006.