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Man acquitted in '98 slaying

Lawyer said client acted in self defense

By Dave Racher

The lawyer argued that an innocent man was being tried for a North Philadelphia killing last year.

So attorney A. Charles Peruto Jr. decided to put the dead man on trial this week.

The tactic resulted in an acquittal for Peruto's client, Grady Wilson, 31, a nightclub bouncer and asbestos remover of Myrtlewood Street near Master.

Peruto called the victim Omar Dockery, 10 "a troublemaker". With a record of several robbery convictions, and said Wilson shot and killed him in self-defense while being robbed on Dec. 8, 1998.

The attorney said when Wilson thought Dockery was reaching for a gun, he feared for his life and pulled out his own gun and fired.

No weapon was found on or near Dockery's body.

The prosecution disputed the defense theory, contending that Wilson shot Dockery in retaliation for an earlier incident.

It was pointed out that Dockery's car keys were found inside Wilson's home after the killing.

Wilson told police that he fired a shot into Dockery's chest after being robbed and knocked to the ground.

He said he saw Dockery reaching under his shirt.

Peruto argued that at the time of his death, Dockery had a bullet lodged in his chest from an earlier violent incident.

"My Client has no prior record," said Peruto.

Five cops testified about inconsistencies in Wilson's statement.

Common Pleas Judge D. Webster Keogh, who heard the case without a jury said that once the defense raises a self-defense issue, it's up to the prosecution to refute the claim.

And in this case the prosecution was unable to do that, said Keogh.