

DOOTHAN EAGLE

Man found guilty of molesting 6-year-old girl

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Lee

A Geneva County jury found a 36-year-old Malvern man guilty of sodomizing and sexually abusing a girl under the age of 12.



Geneva County District Attorney Kirke Adams said a jury found Justin David Lee guilty late Wednesday of all six of the felony charges filed against him.

Adams said the jury returned the guilty verdicts against Lee

on the victim's ninth birthday late Wednesday afternoon.

Adams said the jury found Lee guilty of three felony counts of first-degree sodomy, felony first-degree rape, felony sex abuse of a child less than the age of 12 and felony incest. Adams said the defendant has several different names he has gone by in the community, in-

cluding Justin Lee Odom, Justin David Lee or Justin Lee.

Adams said the sexual assaults happened between 2011 and 2012, which would put the victim at around 6 years old. He also said the victim testified during the trial, which started earlier this week at the Geneva

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Guilty

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County Courthouse in Geneva.

Investigators with the Geneva County Sheriff's Office originally arrested Lee in July 2012.

"When the victim is under 12, there's extra evidentiary rules that benefit the child in that child advocacy center officials and others can testify what the child told them," Adams said. "In this case, the child was consistent from the beginning with details and facts as to what happened."

Lee will be sentenced at a later, undetermined date. Adams said Lee faces enhanced sentence ranges because of the age of the victim. He said Lee faces 20 to 99 years or life in prison for the sodomy and rape charges, all Class A felonies like armed robbery and murder. He also said Lee faces 10 to 20 years in prison for the Class B felony of sex abuse of a child under the age of 12. Lee faces one to 10 years for the incest charge.

Assistant Geneva County District Attorney Cathey Berardi prosecuted the case.

Adams said the prosecution will be seeking the maximum punishment at the sentencing hearing.

"I don't think the general public really wants to believe that these cases happen. It's easy to turn our heads and believe that we live in a world where people don't harm children, but in reality, this happens far too often," Adams said. "It takes a team to prosecute these cases. That team includes not only the prosecutor, law enforcement, the Department of Human Resources and the child advocacy center."

Attorney David Holmes, who represented Lee at trial, said his client has maintained his innocence and continues to do so.