



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## **Strickland stops execution after team can't access veins** **Broom requests lawyer after an hour**

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**Plain Dealer Reporter**

Lucasville- Gov. Ted Strickland took an unprecedented step and ordered a temporary halt to the planned execution of Romell Broom Tuesday after the execution team could not administer the lethal injection.

For more than two hours, the team attempted to insert two shunts into a vein of the compliant Broom, who tried several times to assist his executioners by shifting positions, rubbing his arm and pointing out possible usable veins.

The delay will likely add to the debate about the death penalty in Ohio and what constitutes cruel and unusual punishment. "The sentence is death, not torture plus death," said Kathleen Soltis, chairwoman of the Cleveland Coalition Against the Death Penalty.

"What does reprieve mean in this case? This is getting crazier than usual."

At one point, Broom, 53, lay back on his bed, covered his face with his hands, and cried. Another time, while sitting up, he was seen grimacing as the execution team appeared to seek a vein around his ankles.

A reprieve at this stage of an execution has never happened since the death penalty was reinstated in 1999, said Terry Collins, director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. He said he called the governor and asked for the reprieve after it became clear the execution team was having trouble.

"I could tell my team was becoming somewhat frustrated," Collins said.

The reprieve extends only until Sept. 22.

The drama played out before the family of Tryna Middleton, the 14-year-old girl Broom was convicted of kidnapping, raping and killing 25 years ago.

Tryna's mother and father, Bessye and David Middleton, were there to witness the execution, as was an aunt. They sat in front of a glass window through which they were expecting to see Broom die.

Instead, he never made it out of his nearby cell, where two shunts were to be installed in veins. The shunts allow three drugs to enter the veins and sedate, paralyze and kill the inmate.

The family and others watched the preparation on closed-circuit monitors mounted in the witness area. A camera filmed Broom and captured much of the difficulty the execution team had, as well as Broom's frustration. Broom requested no witnesses initially, but about an hour into the process asked for his attorney, Adele Shank, to be present.

A visibly upset Shank appeared in the witness room not knowing of Broom's request but out of concern for the length of time for the execution.

"The chief justice and the governor have been notified of what's going on," Shank said after the execution team spent 90 minutes trying to insert the shunts.

Collins said the execution team was able to access several veins but they collapsed once saline solution was administered.

He defended the execution team and said: "They continued to do a job that most wouldn't do or couldn't do."

Prison officials have had trouble finding veins to insert shunts before. In May 2007, it took 90 minutes to find a vein on Christopher Newton - so long he was given a bathroom break. While most inmates die within eight minutes of getting the drugs, Newton took 16 minutes.

In May 2006, Joseph Clark cried out that the injection "isn't working" before he was put to death. It took 40 minutes before prison workers found blood vessels in which to insert the shunt.

But in both those cases, the inmates were put to death by the end of the day. Prison officials legally had until midnight to execute Broom, but stopped the process around 4:30 p.m.

In 2004, a death row inmate filed a lawsuit - later joined by other inmates - that challenged Ohio's execution procedures. That case was rendered moot last year when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 7-2 that Kentucky's use of lethal injection was acceptable. Like Kentucky and most other states, Ohio uses a three-drug cocktail in its executions.

Several states moved to lethal injection after two executions in Florida that used the electric chair. In 1997, flames shot out of the mask covering the head of Pedro Medina and, in 1999, blood poured from the mouth of Allen Lee Davis.

Officials revised the state's execution procedures earlier this year.

Among the changes were giving the inmate a shake or pinch after a sedative is administered, to make sure the condemned is unconscious and unable to feel pain as the lethal drugs are administered.

Broom was transported from Youngstown to Lucasville Monday morning. He was placed in a cell with a glass front so he could be constantly watched by staff.

Broom watched television, read and slept Monday and talked by phone with his brother and sister.

He awoke Tuesday at 5:15 a.m. He watched more television, showered and had cereal and coffee for breakfast, prison officials said.

He met with Shank and called his brother three times. Preparations for his execution began around 12:45 p.m., after a federal court denied Broom's appeal.

Broom is on death row for the September 1984 killing of Tryna Middleton.

Tryna Middleton and two 13-year-old friends were walking home from a high school football game in East Cleveland in September 1984 when she was abducted at knifepoint about 11:30 p.m. Her body was found three hours later at a parking lot having been sexually assaulted and stabbed seven times.

The two friends who ran for help later picked Broom out of a police lineup.

Five months before Tryna was killed, Broom was released from prison after serving nine years for raping a 12-year-old girl.

Broom has maintained that he did not kill Tryna.

Her parents declined to speak with the media after Tuesday's events.

Shank said she is considering additional appeals.

"We don't want to see a repeat of this ever," she said.

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