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City man faces 8 years for selling crack

Christa Lee Rock, Register Staff

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NEW HAVEN — A 22-year-old Garden Street man must spend at least "eight calendar years" in prison after a Superior Court jury convicted him Thursday of selling a hit of crack in November 2000.

The jury of six deliberated for more than four hours before returning a verdict against Theo Sargent on one count of selling narcotics and another of selling within 1500 feet of a school.

Sargent will face a mandatory minimum of eight years in prison, but as much as 25, when Judge Bernadette Conway sentences him.

Sargent contested the charges for nearly two years as his attorney, Tara Knight, argued that the undercover police officer had bought from a dealer on Kensington Street, but saw him for only 30 seconds. Three weeks later, as she applied for an arrest warrant, she identified Sargent as the seller.

The prosecutor said the drugs were sold at 87 Kensington St., near Dwight School.

"For a piece of crack cocaine the size of a fingernail, where I think the identification of the rookie police officer was implausible ... it's incredible," Knight said.

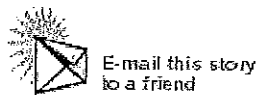
Assistant State's Attorney Jack Doyle said the IDs were solid - the undercover cop and another officer both identified Sargent "down to the kid's tan moccasins," he said.

"This is not an innocent kid; he's got two prior weapon convictions," Doyle said.

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