

Thursday, 09/27/07

Koulis case goes to jury Friday

By MITCHELL KLINE
Staff Writer

FRANKLIN — The case of a former plastic surgeon accused of murder in the overdose death of his girlfriend will go to the jury on Friday.

Attorneys in the case gave closing arguments on Thursday, the ninth day of the Dr. Christ Koulis trial. Koulis is accused of injecting Lesa Buchanan with the drug Oxycodone. Buchanan, 35, died on July 4, 2005 after a she and Koulis had what he described as a “marathon sex” weekend. Koulis could be found guilty of second degree murder if jurors believe he gave and/or injected Buchanan with the drug.

Four different medical experts said Buchanan had granules, or small fragments of crushed pills, in her lungs. They said it’s sign that Buchanan was a chronic intravenous drug user. On Thursday, famed forensic pathologist Dr. Bruce Levy testified that Buchanan’s death was caused by this lung condition and the Oxycodone, which depresses respiratory function.

Defense attorneys said Buchanan acquired the drug and injected it into herself. They told jurors there is no evidence that the drug came from Koulis or that he did the injecting.

“Their relationship wasn’t normal,” attorney Lee Ofman said. “Apparently 90 percent of this relationship is about (sex).”

Witnesses who testified said the couple routinely argued and broke up several times but would get back together. Ofman said Buchanan, who was an artist, didn’t make any money and Koulis paid for her apartment and other living expenses.

Defense Attorney David Raybin attacked the Franklin Police Department’s handling of the case, calling it “a lackluster” and “chewing gum investigation.” He claimed detectives lost three pill bottles, didn’t know what they were looking for and told jurors “half truths.” He questioned why police didn’t record interviews with Koulis the day Buchanan died and said they found out that Koulis had pled guilty to drug charges in 2002 and assumed he was guilty in this case.

Assistant District Attorney General Kim Helper told jurors Koulis had to have provided the drug. She said it “doesn’t make sense” that Buchanan would have needles, syringes, drugs and alcohol swabs that Koulis could easily take from his office.

Helper said the story Koulis told jurors — that Buchanan injected herself during the Fourth of July weekend — didn't add up. She pointed to a two-hour video the couple made of themselves having sex, and risqué photos of Buchanan on Koulis' cell phone. In the video Buchanan can be seen holding gauze to her groin and telling Koulis the "medicine" she took made her sick.

Helper said Koulis wanted to "control" Buchanan.

"He was down there for a weekend of sex," Helper said. "He injected her to make her feel good. He was doing the injections. He's a doctor. He knows how to get those stick makes lined up.... His way of controlling Lesa Buchanan was through medications."

Jurors are scheduled to meet at the Williamson County Courthouse at 9 a.m. to begin deliberations.