

THE CINCINNATI POST



SCRIPPS HOWARD

Baby killer gets 15 years but avoids death penalty

By Kimball Perry
Post staff reporter

Shannon Brown cried tears of joy when her son, Shandon, was born almost three years ago.

She stood before a judge Tuesday and again wept, this time tears of grief and frustration as Rodney Whipple admitted he shook and bit the 18-month-old baby to death.

"My child's life is worth more than 15 years, a lot more than 15 years," the mother told Hamilton County

Common Pleas Judge Thomas Nurre. "He was a miracle. I didn't bring him home until he was two months old.

"I can't have no more kids. (Whipple) knew that. He has four kids."

Fearful they would be unable to convince a jury that Whipple intended to kill the child, Hamilton County Prosecutor Mike Allen dropped the death specification charge and allowed Whipple to plead to a reduced charge.

Nurre accepted the plea deal,

which allowed Whipple, 28, to escape the possibility of facing the death penalty, and immediately sentenced the baby-killer to the mandatory 15 years to life imprisonment.

The 6-foot-4, 300-pound Whipple admitted he beat and bit the baby to death while baby-sitting April 4, 2000, in the Colerain Township home of the baby's grandmother. Prosecutors' evidence included a forensic dentist who would testify that the bite marks on the baby were made by Whipple and that Whipple's blood was found at

the scene of the baby's death.

"He left my son lifeless for my mother to (find)," Ms. Brown said.

Whipple had earlier rejected the plea bargain he accepted Tuesday. He likely would have argued the bite mark was from a previous incident and would have blamed the child's mother for the death, prosecutors believed. The child died after suffering two broken arms, bites, a brain injury caused by blunt trauma, and internal organ damage.