

erald

ND TEXAS COASTER

RICHMOND, TEXAS

50 CENTS

Man gets 45 years in murder case

BY STEPHEN PALKOT

spalkot@bherald.com

A 22-year-old man who admitted participating in the murder of a Houstonian left naked in a ditch in Four Corners in 2007 was sentenced to 45 years in prison this week in Fort Bend County.

Defendant Melvin Haynes pleaded guilty to first-degree felony murder in December, with an agreement the sentence would not exceed 45 years in prison. Judge Thomas Culver III, left to decide on that sentence Tuesday, went with the entire 45 years. Victim Ruben Caicedo, a Columbian national, had been found dead in a pile of brush near the Four Corner Recreational Center on Old Richmond Road on March 2, 2007. Prosecutor Amanda Bolin said Caicedo had been a drug dealer, and while the motive of his murder remains unclear, it appears related to an effort to retaliate against him for his drug-dealing activities at one particular apartment complex in Houston.

Caicedo could not be identified by the Sheriff's Office until they released a sketch of him through Crime Stoppers.

Three men face murder charges, including Marcus Francis, who testified at Tuesday's sentencing hearing and who may also testify against fellow defendant Rubin Dansberry. Evidence shows Haynes caused Caicedo's death by blunt force trauma and strangulation. Dansberry has been offered a plea bargain sentence of 15 years in prison for his continued involvement in the case, said prosecutor Amanda Bolin.

The Sheriff's Office conducted the investigation that led to Haynes' arrest on April 19, 2007. He could have been sentenced for up to life in prison.