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Michael McIlveen 'kicked 60 times'

By Maeve Connolly

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A KEY witness in the Michael McIlveen murder trial has told how his attackers struck him repeatedly with a baseball bat and kicked him more than 60 times in a frenzied attack.

A friend of the murdered Ballymena teenager described how the gang stood over the 15-year-old kicking him about the head and body as one of them hit Michael with a baseball bat.

In video-taped evidence that was played to Antrim Crown Court yesterday the 17-year-old witness, who cannot be named because of his age, described how he had pleaded with the gang to stop and tried to hold them back but was outnumbered.

The witness said that 19-year-old Jeff Colin Lewis from Rossdale in Ballymena had delivered the most and "the hardest" kicks – "about 30".

He said Mr Lewis had been "putting as much effort into the kick as he could", swinging his foot "as if kicking a football" and shouting sectarian abuse.

Michael was "rolling about" as he was kicked 20 to 25 times "if not more" by Christopher Francis Kerr (22) from Carnduff Drive in Ballymena and "about 10 times" by Aaron Cavana Wallace (20) from Moat Road, also in the Co Antrim town, the witness said.

He said he could not be sure how often Christopher Andrew McLeister (18) of Knockeen Crescent had kicked the teenager.

The witness said Michael and one of the accused, Mr Lewis, had been fighting when another defendant, Mervyn Wilson Moon (20) – who has already pleaded guilty to murder – ran up and knocked the Catholic teenager to the ground with a "a big full-pelt swing" of a baseball bat.

He said the others then joined in, kicking with "full swings", and that Moon from Douglas Terrace in the town, had hit Michael four more times by the time the witness reached the scene.

"I said: 'Look, Mervyn, you can't do that... One on one is all right but not 11 on one... I don't care what you are or who you are or what religion you are, that's sick. You can't do that. You can't beat someone on the ground with a baseball bat," the court heard.

The witness estimated that the attack had lasted five minutes and left his friend acting "like a wee 'un, like a two-year-old child".

"He was muttering as if his jaw was broken and trying to talk but couldn't," the witness said in a police interview taped hours before Michael's life-support machine was turned off on May 8 2006.

The trial continues.

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