

Gonzalez will get 25 years in slaying

By Randall Beach, Register Staff

NEW HAVEN — Harry Gonzalez Tuesday was found guilty of the murder of Philip Vinci at Edgewood Park in October 2005, but insists he did not kill the man.

Gonzalez, 39, formerly of 263 Dixwell Ave., agreed through his attorney to receive a 25-year prison term when sentenced May 16.

Gonzalez pleaded under the Alford doctrine, in which a defendant does not admit guilt, but concedes the state has enough evidence to convict him. Such a plea results in a finding of guilt.

According to Gonzalez' attorney, Walter Bansley III, the sentence will be served concurrently with an 80-year prison term Gonzalez already is serving for the fatal stabbing of retired teacher Joanne Trautwein.

Police said the attack on Vinci was witnessed by a jogger who reported he saw Vinci beaten by a Hispanic male holding an aluminum baseball bat. The jogger later picked Gonzalez out of a lineup.

The jogger, who said he continued running because he thought he was being set up for a robbery, looked back to see the man hitting Vinci with the bat. The jogger quickly called police, but they could not find Vinci nor his assailant. Three days later, Vinci's body was discovered in shallow water at the park.

Bansley said Gonzalez denies he was involved, but given the earlier conviction and sentence as well as the jogger's testimony, Gonzalez decided not to contest the charges in a trial.

Gonzalez was also charged with robbery counts and assault in the park crime. Bansley said those charges probably will be nolle prosequi May 16.

Gonzalez' alleged accomplice in the park attack, Jennifer Kos, is facing charges of felony murder as well as robbery conspiracy, aiding and abetting robbery and hindering prosecution.

Kos' attorney, Thomas Farver, said Wednesday she is cooperating with prosecutors in the case, but "there is no deal on the table."

Farver expects Kos' case also to be resolved with a plea agreement after Gonzalez is sentenced.

Kos is serving a 10-year sentence for robbery, which was imposed after she testified against Gonzalez in the Trautwein case. Police said she participated in that crime too, which occurred one week before the Vinci murder.