

# Santa Cruz killer gets 16 years to life in prison

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SENTINEL STAFF REPORT

Stephen Christopher Cardoza, 27, formerly of Santa Cruz, was sentenced to 16



**CARDOZA**

years to life in state prison Monday in Santa Clara County Superior Court for the November 1999 killing of 23-year-old Danielle Dewart.

Dewart's father, Dennis, said the family is relieved this case is finally over but they will feel a loss always.

"It's more closure, but it will never be fully over for us," he said.

Dewart was born and raised in Santa Cruz.

Cardoza, who pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in April in a plea bargain worked out with the Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office, will serve at least 15 years before being eligible for parole.

The killing occurred near Gilroy and was witnessed by a couple out for an evening walk.

The autopsy revealed Dewart had been stabbed at least 77 times, among other trauma. The attack allegedly took place after the two argued about their relationship.

The prosecutor and Dewart's family wanted to settle the case because a trial would have been difficult for the family.