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### Bat may hold key to West Liberty murder Autopsy confirms blunt weapon killed man, 22

*Dave Gosch*

Gazette staff writer (1 of 2 stories) (Mug of Wieneke with story) (Color pic with story) WEST LIBERTY - The blood-stained barrel of an aluminum softball bat may hold the key to finding the person who bludgeoned a West Liberty man to death Tuesday. Corey Wieneke, 22, was found dead around 6 p.m. Tuesday by his fiancée at his rural West Liberty home. His fiancée, Jody Hotz, also of West Liberty, last saw him alive around 8:15 a.m. Tuesday, according to authorities.

An autopsy performed Wednesday determined Wieneke's death was caused by blunt trauma to the body. A softball bat found one mile from Wieneke's home was taken to the Division of Criminal Investigation's laboratory for testing.

Authorities said the bat could inflict injuries consistent with Wieneke's death.

Authorities divulged little about the scene inside Wieneke's house or the circumstances surrounding the murder. They did say Wieneke's body was found in his bedroom.

Wieneke was an employee at Wink's Tap, a downtown West Liberty tavern owned by his grandmother, Betty Wieneke. Corey Wieneke worked the late shift as a bartender.

Muscatine County sheriff's deputies cordoned off the area around his home from early Tuesday evening until 8:30 a.m. Wednesday while DCI personnel processed the murder scene, which is about three miles west of West Liberty.

That's when news media were allowed to drive 1 miles up a gravel road to photograph Wieneke's residence.

However, KCRG-TV (Channel 9) reporter Mike Wagner couldn't get his vehicle started so he decided to walk to the one-story house. When Wagner got about a mile away, he saw the metal softball bat on the north edge of the road.

Wagner then informed law officers, who hurried from the murder scene to see the bat. DCI investigators then photographed and took measurements before removing the bat from the scene. Turn to page 8A: Murder pu,jh Murder:Bat still had bar code tag 1A The bat had white tape around the handle and a blue barrel with Power Flite Heavyweight in white lettering on it. The white lettering appeared to have blood stains on it. The bat also had the bar code still affixed, which may indicate that it was bought recently.

Anyone with information about the case is urged to call the Muscatine County Sheriff's Department at (319) 263-6055 or 1-(800) 369-9635.