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Peter Small

A man whom defence lawyers say started the gunfight that killed innocent bystander Ephraim Brown denies being anywhere near the scene.

But Corey Stephens testified Tuesday he felt badly because the 11-year-old boy died in a shootout he believes was started by enemies looking for him.

"I should have been there. We would have seen what happened," Stephens said. "Maybe I would have got shot, not him."

Ephraim died after being hit in the neck by a stray bullet just before 1 a.m. on July 22, 2007, at an outdoor birthday party at a Sheppard Ave. W. housing complex.

Gregory Sappleton and Akiel Eubank, both 24, have pleaded not guilty to second-degree murder.

Sappleton's lawyer, Edward Sapiano, asserts Stephens is responsible for initiating the shooting.

But the admitted drug dealer heatedly denied allegations by Leora Shemesh, a lawyer for Eubank, that he packed a gun that night and participated in the battle.

"The reason you feel bad is because . . . you were responsible for the shooting," Shemesh suggested.

"No," he replied.

Stephens insisted he left the complex, where he lived with his mother, long before the battle because he heard that someone was looking to shoot him, and went downtown.

Earlier Tuesday, Simone Osborne testified that her sister, Kishauna Thomas — the Crown's only alleged eyewitness to the shooting and a cousin of the victim — told her she was actually indoors when the gun battle occurred.

"Somebody came downstairs and told her that her cousin was shot and she came outside. When she got outside he was lying on the floor," Osborne testified.

"She said that somebody had a gun but she didn't see the shooter," Osborne told Sapiano.

This clashes with Thomas's testimony, in which she described seeing Sappleton and Eubank shooting at each other.

Five months afterward, Osborne testified, Thomas confided she did not tell police about the roles Stephens and three other men — Shamrock, Dicey and Marlon — played in the shooting out of fear.

Shevonne Stephens-Brown, 18, Corey Stephens' sister, testified Tuesday that she heard Thomas yelling "Corey, no," during the shootout, but she did not see her brother at the complex that night.

The defence closed its case Tuesday.