

D.A. outlines evidence, Simpson wants out of cell



LOS ANGELES (AP)— The bloody ski mask reportedly found at O.J. Simpson's home after his ex-wife and a friend were slain doesn't exist, a prosecutor said Wednesday.

Deputy District Attorney Marcia Clark reluctantly refuted a widely publicized account of a bloody ski mask being found in Simpson's house.

The matter came up after defense attorney Robert Shapiro asked the court to order the prosecution to turn over additional evidence to the defense.

Simpson has been jailed without bail on double murder charges since Friday in the slayings of his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson. "If there is a ski mask with bloodstains, we would like the right to examine that today," Shapiro said.

Clark responded that Shapiro had everything she had.

"So you are saying there is no ski mask?" the judge asked.

"There is no ski mask," the prosecutor said.

The existence of such evidence was first reported last week by KCOP-TV, citing unidentified law enforcement sources.

KCOP News Director Jeff Wald said Wednesday he was trying to contact the source of the report and wouldn't immediately comment.

Simpson was alert although haggard at the hearing, in contrast to his arraignment Monday, when he appeared droopy-eyed.

At one point Wednesday, he was overheard asking deputies to let him read rather than return to a holding cell during a closed-door meeting between lawyers and the judge.

"I'll do anything to stay out of that cell," Simpson said.

"I'll sit here and read," he said, but deputies took him out

of the courtroom to the holding cell.

The conversation was picked up by an unauthorized microphone of KCAL-TV.

The judge ordered the microphone removed from the defense table.

"I find it absolutely irresponsible," Shapiro said outside court.

The bloody ski mask was just one of several pieces of evidence whose existence was reported last week by the media quoting unidentified law enforcement sources. Authorities also were said to have seized a bloody glove from Simpson's house and found bloodstains in his car and on his driveway.

Simpson's lawyer at the time, Howard Weitzman, denied that a bloody glove had been found at the house and declined to discuss the bloodstains.

Detectives also have been unable to find the murder weapon, reported to be a 15-inch knife with a serrated blade. On Tuesday, Los Angeles detectives gave up searching an overgrown field next to a Chicago hotel, where Simpson briefly stayed after the June 12 slayings.

In other matters, the court ruled that Shapiro's experts could examine coroner's evidence in the presence of coroner officials without being videotaped as requested by the district attorney's office.

Clark assured the judge she would provide the defense all reports and notes, including a tape recording of Simpson's June 13 interview with police.

Authorities haven't officially released details about the slayings.

But a coroner's source told KABC-TV that Mrs. Simpson's head was nearly cut off and that Goldman had more than 20 knife wounds and his right ear was nearly severed.

Proposed legislation angers employers

WASHINGTON (AP) - Employer groups are seething over a letter written by the government's chief labor mediator that appears to endorse legislation that would outlaw the replacement of striking workers.

John Calhoun Wells, director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, said in his May 27 letter to Sens. Edward M. Kennedy and Howard Metzenbaum that he believed "the use of striker replacements is destructive to the collective bargaining process" and that it "chills meaningful bargaining."

Wells, appointed last November by President Clinton, said also that he believed the right of employers to replace striking workers "emasculates the right to strike" and that legislation forbidding replacement of workers who walk off their jobs "would not trigger a flood of strikes."

The House passed the striker replacement legislation last spring and it already has cleared the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee,

chaired by Kennedy. But backers have been unable to muster enough votes to force a final vote on the legislation. Opponents have threatened to talk it to death. Proponents have said they are as many as five votes short of the 60 required to force a vote.

Wells wrote the letter in response to a request from Kennedy, D-Mass., and Metzenbaum, D-Ohio, both of whom back the legislation.

Eileen B. Hoffman, general counsel for FMCS, said Wells never intended to endorse.

"His letter was in response to a request from the Congress," she said. "We would never make an opinion about the specific dispute."

She said Wells letter represented "a point of view, not an endorsement."

But business groups said Wells clearly was expressing an opinion in favor of the bill.

"It's political," said Jeffrey Joseph, vice president for domestic policy at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

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