

Puckett denies assault charge in court

Leslie Brooks Suzukamo
St. Paul Pioneer Press (KRT)

MINNEAPOLIS — Former Minnesota Twins star Kirby Puckett broke his silence Monday and denied that he dragged a woman into the men's room of an Eden Prairie restaurant last fall and groped her, saying instead he escorted her in on his arm "like a gentleman would."

Puckett, 43, a Hall of Famer, 10-time All-Star and hero in the Twins' two World Series championships, gave a markedly different account of events the night of Sept. 5 at the Redstone American Grill from his alleged victim.

A witness also testified that the woman bared her breasts to him earlier that evening and a forensic pathologist testified that the quick flashing could account for a small bruise seen by police and a doctor on the woman's right breast several days after that night.

Monday's testimony was a chance for Puckett to refute the story of the alleged victim, a 34-year-old Bloomington woman who had taken the stand for the prosecution last Thursday and testified tearfully at times that a large man grabbed her, dragged her into the restaurant's men's room and pushed her into a stall.

There, she testified, the man bent her over a toilet and groped her breast. She was later examined by a doctor and photographed by Eden Prairie police, and found to have bruises on her arm, ankle and right breast.

The alleged victim works as a mortgage loan officer. The St. Paul Pioneer Press generally does not name people who report being victims of sexual assault.

Puckett, charged with one count of felony false imprisonment and two misdemeanor counts of criminal sexual conduct and assault, faces up to a year in jail if convicted.

Under questioning from his chief

attorney, B. Todd Jones, Puckett denied assaulting the woman.

Puckett's testimony was his first telling of the events of that night. He had not given a statement to police, authorities said.

Puckett was somber on the stand, peering out behind dark glasses he wears due to his glaucoma. He said he went to the restaurant with two friends to celebrate the birthday of one of those friends, Dwayne Harris of Eagan, who helps Puckett try to stay in shape at the Lifetime Fitness center in downtown St. Paul, where Harris is operations manager.

Harris testified that he followed

Puckett to the men's room that night and was shocked when he saw the alleged victim emerge from the men's room right before Puckett was about to enter.

Harris said he watched Puckett and the woman enter the men's room together, and then the woman leave "not more than 10 seconds" later.

When the trial resumes Tuesday, Prosecutor Alan Harris said he'll call up to five witnesses. Closing arguments are expected Wednesday.

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Senate

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in financial aid along with increases in tuition. Diamond did not know how many standing committees the senate requires and couldn't name any senate duties.

Q: How will you figure out how to spend the surplus?

Diamond: My biggest spending priority actually would just be getting people back. Having been overseas, I've seen what campus life is like in other countries, and it's a little more



Diamond

vibrant. Like at the University of Heidelberg (Germany), they have just tons of cultural activities day in and day out, every week of the term, and their terms are 20 weeks long. So any group that came forward with a proposal to throw some sort of event that would bring people back here and kind of create more of a campus community would get a priority from me.

Q: What is the most important thing you should know in order to deal with the budget process?

Diamond: A good knowledge of arithmetic would help. I remember there was an incident last year with some basically numerical errors at one point in the budget process, and that sort of thing should just be assiduously avoided. There's no need for anything like that. Obviously, it's not that hard to go over numbers and make sure that everything adds up.

Joseph Jenkins, a second-year law student focusing on environmental and natural resource law, is an officer in Phi Alpha Delta and a member of the Pro Bono Committee. Jenkins is also the University's American Bar As-

sociation law student representative. He feels the most important issue facing students he would be representing are costly and unnecessary regulations on events. Jenkins did not know how many standing committees the senate requires and misidentified the senate duties as Senate Rules Section 6. He said the most important duty is showing up to meetings.

Q: How will you figure out how to spend the surplus?

Jenkins: Well, for one thing, do you have to spend the surplus? You could use it for something larger — a concert or improvements to the school or something like that. One thing that you'll want to do is definitely talk to organizations to hear what they have going on. If you save the surplus, save for it for a reason, but don't save it if there's organizations that can use it to put on a function or what-not for the school.

Q: What is the most important thing you should know in order to deal with the budget process?

Jenkins: Well, you need to know how much money you have and what your limits are. That way you can focus on that and be able to see ahead and be able to plan the best. I was in the student government when I was an undergrad, and our budget was just so haphazardly done because the administration wouldn't tell us exactly how much it was, and so it's definitely a problem when you can't put down a solid plan.

Faryl Kagan refused an interview with the Emerald; he said some of its editors have "serious issues with misconstruing information."

Mike Martell, a sophomore pre-business major, is the incumbent.



Jenkins

Martell also sits on the ASUO Child Care Task Force. He said higher education funding is the most important issue facing students, adding that the student senate should get more involved with the issue. Martell identified two of the five standing committees required by the senate and said the most important duty as a senator is fulfilling office hours.

Q: How will you figure out how to spend the surplus?

Martell: I don't think anybody really knows how to spend it exactly. It's kind of on a what-comes-up basis: special circumstances, emergencies, when something breaks. There's a new insurance policy where the deductible's gone up from \$500 to \$2,500, so if a large piece of equipment breaks, that's what the surplus is used for. Then just other new activities that haven't been budgeted that add to the cultural and physical development of campus. (To receive surplus) funds, (student groups) need to be relatively fiscally responsible. They have to have what they need budgeted with line-item descriptions and be prepared.

Q: What is the most important thing you should know in order to deal with the budget process?

Martell: When you're starting the PFC process, just knowing that it's a huge time commitment. And you have to be very dedicated if you want to get through, because the groups are dedicated, and if you're not dedicated you're doing a disservice to these groups. Just be prepared to spend a lot of time.

Kevin Odil, a freshman history major, is not involved with any groups on campus. Odil said the most important



Martell

issues facing students are the incidental fee budget and the rising cost of tuition. Odil did not know how many standing committees the senate requires and couldn't name any specific senate duties.

Q: How will you figure out how to spend the surplus?

Odil: Well, we have a huge amount of money right now. Next year, they're going to add the amount of students that are coming here, and so there's no real reason why we should add more to the budget. I mean, each student does not need to



Odil

pay more in incidental fees, and this year it went up like 12 percent. With more students and more money — the economy is strapped, people don't have the money to pay on more incidental fees. Next year, I heard tuition is probably going to go up. I mean, people don't have the money to spend on more incidental fees.

Q: What is the most important thing you should know in order to deal with the budget process?

Odil: Well you have to — I mean, there's a lot of rules, there's a whole packet of how you (deal with) the budget. You have to go over and look at previous budgets — pay increases, things of that nature — to make sure that the budget falls in line with the rules and the needs of the group. I mean, because costs go up, and that's the thing that everyone knows. Sometimes you have to spend more on the same thing that you got last time.

Mena Ravassipour, a sophomore general science major, currently holds senate Seat 11. She is involved in several committees, including the Faculty Personnel committee and the Uni-

versity Executive committee. Ravassipour said students have individual concerns, but particularly want equal rights and a fair PFC process. Ravassipour identified four of the five standing committees required by the senate and said going to meetings, attending office hours and having a presence around groups were among the most important senate duties.

Q: How will you figure out how to spend the surplus?

Ravassipour: Well, I don't think it lays on one individual person. I think it's definitely a group process. I think PFC did a pretty good job this year, and (when I attended PFC meetings), I thought it was really amazing, and hence I'm running for PFC. I think it would be an amazing process to get involved with, and I think it's important to be responsible when allocating student funds.

Q: What is the most important thing you should know in order to deal with the budget process?

Ravassipour: Well, I think that there's many things that you should know, but the thing that you should remember is that there's opportunities out there, and you have to be aware that there's opportunities. And so it's not all about numbers. You have to be aware that there's opportunities for groups to grow. I think the most important thing is you need to remember that we're out there to create better groups so more students can get involved and so people can feel like this is a community.



Ravassipour

Contact the news editor at janmontry@dailyemerald.com.

ASUO

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Association. Morales, also 23 years old, is an undeclared junior.

Q: What are your campus initiatives?

Melton: The first campus initiative would be student empowerment, which essentially means having more student representation in decision-making bodies. So, for example, the general assembly is made up of 1,500 administrators and faculty members, yet there's only 49 students.

Our second issue is fair housing contracts. This pretty much speaks to there being no term, no grace period for students to get out of their residence hall contracts. For instance, if somebody wants to become part of the greek system and can't get out of their dorm contract, it's not giving that student the experience they're looking for.

Morales: The third issue is graduate and law school student advocacy. (We will) create a position in our office that will advocate for those students. Law school and

graduate students pay the same amount of student fees; however, they don't receive comparable services.

Our last issue is supporting international student issues. As we know, international students pay the same amount of money to go here as out-of-state students, yet don't receive or don't have access to the resources that they do.

Q: How would you make the ASUO relevant to students?

Melton: To make something relevant, you first have to make it accessible. I think you can never do enough work around making the community that you serve feel welcome. Then you work on tangible issues that actually affect people's lives — like tuition, like making sure there's students repre-



Melton

senting the rest of the student population in decision-making bodies.

Christa Shively, a 21-year-old senior double major in history and women and gender studies, is chairwoman of the Associated Students Presidential Advisory Board and chairwoman of the EMU Board. Twenty-two-year-old Greg Bae is a senior triple major in mathematics, economics and political science. Bae is a member of Delta Sigma Phi and has worked with APASU and OSPiRG.



Morales

Q: What are your campus initiatives?

Shively: To begin with, we want to continue the leadership development center initiative. (That) would be a center on campus where people could receive leadership training in a non-biased, non-political environment.

Bae: The second issue — the point system. Our focus is to increase the quality of life for residence hall students. In instituting a universal point system (for food), we would spearhead a campaign to be able to use those points for EMU vendors.

Shively: The EMU Board has looked at doing this for the past couple years, but we never really had the leverage to get it done. I think it's something the board is still interested in pursuing. I think if we were able to mobilize enough pressure from a broad base of students on campus then housing could be persuaded.

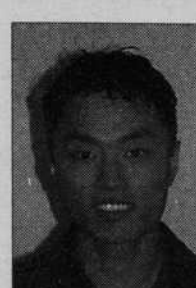
The third issue is diversity.

Bae: I've been working with the MCC and APASU, so issues that pertain to students of color is something

that really hits home with me. (We plan) to introduce a new staff position — the student events coordinator. This person would bring the campus at large together by having one place where information on the student union events, greek related events and sporting events can be accessible.

Q: How do you make the ASUO relevant to students?

Bae: Many students don't have a lot of knowledge of what the ASUO does and how it affects campus. The student events coordinator or a bi-weekly ASUO column in the Emerald would increase the awareness of how the ASUO is relevant to their day-to-day lives as students.



Bae

Contact the news editor at brookreinhard@dailyemerald.com.