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## Puckett jurors can't reach easy verdict in trial

**Michael Hirsley**  
Chicago Tribune (KRT)

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Jurors in the sexual assault trial of baseball Hall of Famer Kirby Puckett were to begin a second day of deliberations Thursday after being unable to reach a verdict in their first five hours together.

In closing arguments Wednesday, prosecuting attorney Alan Harris and defense attorney B. Todd Jones offered the jury starkly different images of what happened Sept. 6, 2002, in a suburban restaurant-bar men's room that led to the charges against Puckett.

Harris, whose demeanor was largely understated throughout the trial, said Puckett threw his accuser around "like a rag doll" in a "violent physical act."

Insisting that did not happen, a brasher Jones said, "What happened was real simple. She wanted to go into the restroom. He took her into the rest-

room. It may not have been the wisest decision, but it was real simple."

The extended jury deliberations, however, attest that it is more complex. Among factors complicating the case from the outset is the stature of Puckett, 43, as a popular All-Star center fielder who led the Minnesota Twins to two World Series titles.

Harris demanded "equal justice, not celebrity justice." He called for a guilty verdict on all charges against Puckett — false imprisonment, a felony; fifth-degree criminal sexual conduct, a gross misdemeanor, and fifth-degree assault, a misdemeanor.

Jones countered that "celebrity status doesn't just cut one way," suggesting Puckett's accuser might be contemplating a subsequent lawsuit. He argued his client should be found not guilty "because the state did not meet their burden of proof beyond a reasonable doubt."

Each attorney used large placards to enhance their arguments to the jury.

Jones spread on the floor a blueprint drawn to scale of the bathroom stall where the woman said Puckett dragged her and groped her breast. Using a ruler to measure the stall's width at 25 1/2 inches, he implied that the stocky, broad-shouldered Puckett would have a hard time doing what the woman said in that narrow a space.

Harris focused on the testimony of ski salesman Alan Anderson, who he emphasized was not a friend of the accuser, and who said he saw Puckett pull the woman into the men's room and saw her emerge terrified, "in tears, almost frantic."

Jones attacked Anderson's credibility, saying he admitted to having "at least seven beers" that night, had not been initially alarmed by what he saw and had received a ride home with the woman and one of her friends afterward. That gave them time to collaborate on their version of what happened, Jones said.

He noted to the jury that Puckett's accuser said he pulled her to three different stalls, but there are only two in the Redstone American Grill men's room. Prosecutor Harris argued that not being able to remember how many stalls there were "is more consistent with a violent, physical act than with being casually walked in."

Harris instructed jurors, the "question you will have to decide is did he escort her like a gentleman (as Puckett testified) or throw her around like a rag doll inside the restroom and forcefully fondle her breast."

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## Basketball

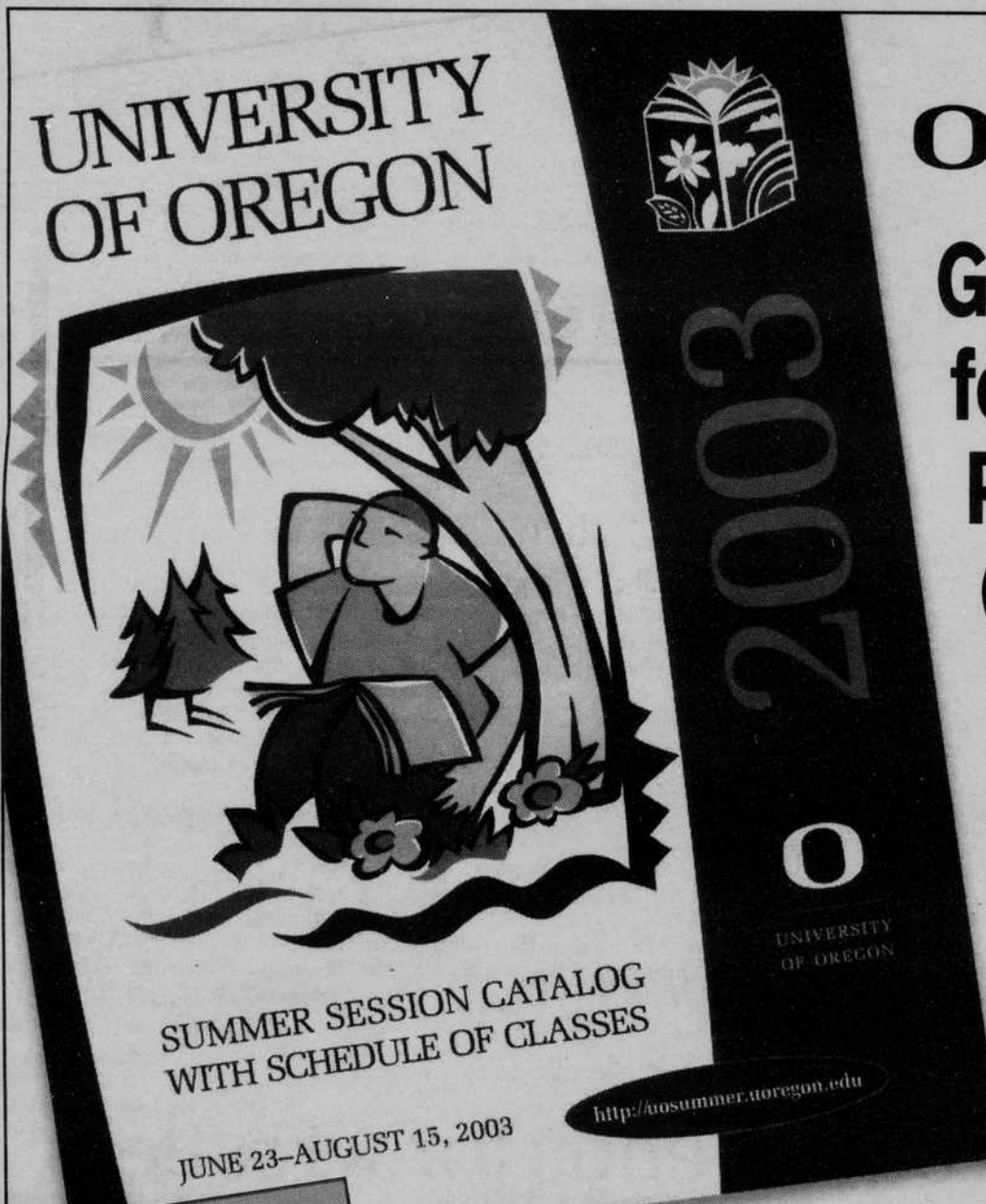
continued from page 11

"People have got to understand that every good program in the country goes through this," Kent said. "Everybody has the speculation at the end of the year whether or not coaches are going to leave, whether or not players are going to come out early. Those aren't negatives, those are positives, and that tells me that our program is at a certain level that it gets into those situations."

But the fact remains that Kent will make the trip to the Final Four without his team, and in order to go there with the Ducks next season, he may need the support of two Lukes.

Contact the sports editor at peterhockaday@dailyemerald.com.

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