

By  
| The Tampa Tribune

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TAMPA - The man accused of posing as an undercover police officer in order to rape a woman on Bayshore Boulevard told jurors he's a thief but not a rapist.

Luis Munuzuri Harris testified today that he used a woman's bank card in order to fill his gas tank and also to gamble at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino.

But he denied raping the woman or posing as an officer to pull her over and kidnap her.

"I used her ATM card without her consent," he tearfully told jurors. "I didn't rape her. I didn't force her to have sex."

Harris, 31, took the stand in his own defense as his stop-and-go trial inched toward a conclusion. Prosecutors rested their case in the morning; the defense in the afternoon.

Harris was among the last witnesses.

He bristled under the restraints of cross-examination, preferring to present his own rambling narrative refuting the state's witnesses. He expressed his dismay at being reined in by making faces and shaking his head.

When the trial resumes Thursday morning, attorneys are expected to make their closing arguments. Then, jurors will begin their deliberations.

Harris faces life in prison if convicted of kidnapping, robbing and raping the woman in July.

He already had given jurors his version of events: that he pulled over to help the woman, and that they hit it off, went drinking and gambling, and then had consensual sex in his back seat.

He gave that account in his opening statement last week while temporarily acting as his own attorney.

His story remained the same when he took the witness stand.

Harris said he first met the woman earlier that night at a gas station and that they flirted.

He said he was headed to the casino about 10 minutes later after dropping off a friend and noticed a motorist weaving on Bayshore. He said the vehicle hit the curb twice before coming to a stop. He said he pulled over to help.

It happened to be the woman from the gas station, he said.

In her testimony Tuesday, the woman denied ever meeting Harris until she saw a blue light and he waved her to the curb. She said Harris told her he was an undercover narcotics agent and that he was taking her to jail on suspicion of drunken driving.

The woman said Harris handcuffed her and put her in the back of his car.

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