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MIAMI-DADE CIRCUIT COURT

TRIAL OF HARREL BRADDY: Man on trial over girl killed by gators

Nine years after police say he left a 5-year-old to be eaten by gators, Harrel Braddy is on trial and facing the death penalty.

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Quatisha Maycock, five years old, defenseless and alone, was dumped by the side of Alligator Alley nine years ago and left to die.

On Monday, the man accused of her murder and of kidnapping her mother sat quietly in Miami-Dade Circuit Court, taking notes as a prosecutor told jurors the horrific details of the child's last moments. Harrel Braddy has massive hands that made the legal pad he was writing on seem puny. Police say he used those hands to twice try to squeeze the life out of Quatisha's mother, choking her until she passed out. The second time, he left her for dead in a sugar-cane field in Palm Beach County, miles from where he left her little girl. Assistant State Attorney Abbe Rifkin told jurors the child's autopsy showed she was still alive when alligators ripped off her arm and bit her head. Shandelle Maycock testified Monday, fighting back tears to identify a picture of her dead child. Before she took the stand, Braddy was taken out of the courtroom so she wouldn't have to walk past him.

When he returned, he seethed. "Since everybody feels like they're afraid of me, I'll stay home and let my lawyers do the trial," he burst out. Circuit Judge Leonard Glick interrupted him: "I hate to disappoint you, but no one's afraid of you here." Maycock, however, was clearly uncomfortable. When Rifkin asked her to identify the defendant in court, she barely looked at him. During the balance of her testimony, she looked down or focused on Rifkin. Twice Maycock broke down sobbing, first when she was asked a basic question about her daughter's age, prompting the judge to send the jury out of the room while she recovered. Back on the stand, she explained how she met Braddy and his wife through a friend at church. She was a single North Miami-Dade mother, 22 and struggling to work and raise her child. Braddy gave her rides to the store and sometimes picked up her daughter.

One night in 1998, he was at her apartment after taking her to pick up her daughter. When she asked him to leave, he flew into a rage, knocking her to the floor and choking her, she said. On the stand Monday, she rubbed her neck remembering the nine-year-old injuries.

Prosecutor Rifkin told the jury that Braddy put Maycock and her daughter into his car and drove north. When Maycock tried to grab her daughter and jump out of the car, Braddy put her in the trunk. When he reached a deserted stretch of U.S. 27, he got Maycock out of the car and again choked her until she passed out. He left her for dead in a cane field and drove to Alligator Alley, where he dumped Quatisha. Braddy's attorney, G. P. Della Fera, told the jury Braddy never hurt the child or her mother, and he questioned Miami-Dade detectives' accounts of statements Braddy gave.

Security was tight in the courtroom Monday, with Braddy wearing an electronic device on his arm that police officers can activate to give him an electric shock if he misbehaves. He was also fitted with a leg brace that holds his knee stiff to prevent him from running. Braddy has escaped from the courthouse before. In 1984, he tried to strangle a Miami-Dade corrections officer and took off. He was captured in Broward and was able to disarm two deputies at a hospital and escape again. Officers located him a few hours later, but he escaped a third time and spent 11 days on the run before he was picked up in Georgia. He was sentenced to 30 years in prison but released after serving only 13. **The murder case has been delayed for nine years because Braddy has fired a series of lawyers and even tried to represent himself for several months before agreeing to let Della Fera and co-counsel Terence Lenamon try the case.**

If he is convicted, he is facing the death penalty.

