

City cop testifies defendant assaulted him during arrest

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EASTON — A city police officer says he was assaulted last year while arresting a man who had yelled obscenities and had made an obscene gesture toward him.

Patrolman Michael Orchulli told a Northampton County jury on Wednesday that Russell Snyder, 34, of the 600 block of Ferry Street in Easton, struggled and punched him in the chest during the confrontation on June 2, 1989.

Snyder was charged with aggravated assault, resisting arrest, disorderly conduct and harassment. He contends he was a victim of police brutality and his jaw was broken during the arrest.

Snyder's trial began Wednesday in the Northampton County courtroom of Judge James C. Hogan.

Orchulli told the jury of eight women and four men that the incident was one of several confrontations with Snyder, who allegedly had made obscene gestures at Orchulli before and, on one occasion outside police headquarters, had asked Orchulli to get former detective James Broscius so Snyder could "kick his ass."

Orchulli gave this account of the June 2 encounter:

It was about 11 p.m., he was driving on Snyder's block and saw the defendant walking east.

Snyder changed direction, coming into the street to yell obscenities and gesture at Orchulli. The officer stopped, confronted Snyder and was punched in the chest when he tried to arrest the man.

"You did all that because somebody gave you an obscene gesture?" defense attorney Leonard Artigliere asked.

"No," Orchulli said, "because he screamed at me at the top of his lungs."

Artigliere wanted to know if Orchulli was mad at the time.

"I wouldn't say I was mad," Orchulli said. "I was more or less disgusted ... I was fed up with Mr. Snyder's conduct. It was getting ridiculous."

He said Snyder had made obscene gestures at him at least twice before but Orchulli said he ignored them. A few weeks before the June 2 incident, Orchulli said, he and Patrolman Douglas Schlegel were in the parking lot outside police headquarters when they saw Snyder walking around their personal vehicles.

"He (Snyder) asked me to go inside and tell Detective Broscius that he was outside waiting for him and he was going to kick his ass," Orchulli recalled.

Orchulli told Snyder that he "sounded ridiculous" and suggested that he should leave.

"We were hoping that whatever was bothering him would blow over," Orchulli said.

On another occasion, Orchulli said, Snyder wanted to know why Orchulli had filed a report indi-

cating that Snyder's girlfriend was a drug informant.

Through questioning, Artigliere suggested that Orchulli may have been upset because Snyder had been critical of Broscius, the city's former vice detective who resigned last year. Broscius was the best man at Orchulli's wedding.

"Didn't Russell Snyder accuse the best man at your wedding of lying?" Artigliere asked.

"He accused me of lying," Orchulli said.

Orchulli denied telling Patrolman Timothy Lambert, who arrived to assist in the arrest, "Tell Broscius I got his boy."

Lambert also told the jury that Orchulli never made that statement.

He said Orchulli and Snyder were both on their knees when he arrived. Orchulli had Snyder in a headlock; Snyder was swinging at Orchulli with his right hand, Lambert testified.

Once he was subdued, Snyder was taken to police headquarters for booking.

At some point, Lambert said, Snyder complained that his jaw was broken. He was taken to Easton Hospital by Lambert and Patrolman Stephen Mazzeo, who is now a vice detective. Lambert said Snyder had no problems talking while en route to the hospital.

Snyder was released after X-rays had been taken and he had been examined by a doctor, Lambert said.

The trial was expected to continue this morning.