

24-year-old accused of assaulting Olympia bus driver suffers from mental health issues

By JEREMY PAWLOSKI

Staff writer
The Olympian
February 26, 2014



Kiel Duggins. PHOTO COURTESY OF OLYMPIA POLICE DEPT.

A 24-year-old man accused of repeatedly punching an Intercity Transit bus driver in the face Tuesday suffers from mental health issues and was off his medications at the time of the alleged attack, court papers state.

Thurston County Superior Court Judge James Dixon ordered Kiel Duggins held on suspicion of second-degree felony assault during a court hearing Wednesday, and set bail at \$20,000.

Duggins is accused of repeatedly punching the bus driver in the face Tuesday afternoon in west Olympia, after the driver tried to throw Duggins off the bus. The bus driver suffered a broken nose in the attack.

The driver ordered Duggins off the bus because he was being loud and profane, court papers state. When Duggins refused to get off the bus, standing in the bus doorway, the driver "reached up and slightly shoved" him off. Duggins then immediately punched the driver in the face, and continued to punch him for more than one minute.

Although Duggins has no prior criminal history, Thurston County Chief Criminal Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Andrew Toynbee argued for \$20,000 bail. Toynbee said he decided to request high bail for Duggins after watching the attack that was captured by surveillance video on the city bus.

On the video, a suspect is seen repeatedly punching the bus driver in the face, continuing his attack long after the driver is dazed and defenseless.

"Words cannot describe the brutality and savagery of this attack," Toynbee told Dixon in court Wednesday.

Duggins' court-appointed attorney James Shackleton, argued in court that as long as Duggins is taking his medication, he is not a danger to anyone. According to court papers, Duggins told court staff that "he takes medication for mental health issues, but is not current with his medication routine."

The suspect in the attack fled after repeatedly punching the bus driver. When Olympia police located Duggins, who had been identified as the suspect in the attack, he spontaneously said, "he would not have had to hit him if he had not shoved him." Duggins continued to tell an Olympia police officer that "he was having a bad day."

River Nason, a 21-year-old recent graduate of The Evergreen State College, was riding on the bus during the attack and tried to pull the assailant off the bus driver. Nason said in an interview Wednesday that he had had a conversation with the suspect who struck the driver prior to the assault, and he was not making sense. However, Nason also said his conversation with the assailant was "friendly."

Nason said that during the attack, he tried to pull the suspect off the driver because his father always taught him to try to keep the peace in such situations. He added that he tried not to get too physical with the assailant, for fear of getting "clocked" himself.

"Somebody's got to do something," Nason said.

Nason said he was extremely shocked by the attack, and that during his years growing up in Seattle and riding the bus, he never witnessed such brutality on public transit.

Read more here: <http://www.theolympian.com/2014/02/26/3006075/24-year-old-accused-of-assaulting.html#storylink=cpy>