

Teen's rape trial begins

■ 16-year-old's defense lawyer says activity was consensual

By **JOHN WHARTON**
Staff writer

A 16-year-old Great Mills boy went on trial Tuesday on charges including the second-degree rape of a 12-year-old girl, as a prosecutor and defense lawyer sparred before jurors over the evidence in the case.

The girl was visiting an aunt during the July 4 holiday weekend, St. Mary's Assistant State's Attorney Julie White told the panel members, when the child accompanied a cousin to John K. Edison Jr.'s family home, where he sat down next to her.

"John Edison grabbed her by the arm, took her off the couch and dragged her down the hallway," the prosecutor said, adding that the suspect pushed the girl onto a bed, partially disrobed her and forced her to

have sexual relations.

"She tried to fight back, ... but he was bigger, he was older and he was stronger," White said. "She was defenseless. She didn't have a chance."

The girl repeatedly implored the suspect to cease his attack, the prosecutor said. "He didn't stop," she said, "until he was finished doing what he wanted to do."

Defense lawyer Kevin McDevitt told the jurors that their duty would not be to decide whether sexual activity occurred "between these two children," but rather was it a forcible rape or "a consensual sexual act that was absolutely non-violent."

Medical examinations found no evidence of injury or trauma to the girl's body, internally or externally, the defense lawyer said, and he said that the

minute amount of DNA evidence recovered backed his assertion that intercourse did not occur. "It's not indicative of a rape," McDevitt said.

Jurors were told of potential evidence that Edison may have been wearing a condom, and of an allegation that he struck the girl with a belt.

Disputing the prosecutor's claim that the girl also had Edison's DNA under her fingernails from scratching him as she resisted, the defense lawyer said the lone scratch on his client was from where a law officer likely held him by the arm.

"The story that the state has presented is based on a girl who was trying to stay out of trouble," McDevitt said.

The trial is expected to conclude later this week.

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