

Teenager gets five years in sexual assault of girl, 11

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JONESBORO — A Jonesboro teenager facing life in prison if convicted of rape was found guilty of lesser charges by a Clayton County Superior Court jury Friday afternoon.

Roderick C. Craft Jr., 18, was convicted of the lesser included offense of sexual battery after a jury deliberated during Thursday and Friday. Prosecutor Mike Thurston said Judge Geronda Carter sentenced Craft to five years in prison. Craft will have to register as a sex offender.

The jury acquitted him of rape, statutory rape, aggravated child molestation and child molestation.

Prosecutors alleged Craft raped the 11-year-old sister of a friend in January 2011.

Craft took the stand in his own defense and denied touching the girl at all under cross-examination by Thurston.

"I ain't done none of that, I ain't seen none of that," said Craft. He said he voluntarily gave a bucal swab the night he was arrested because he was innocent. "I knew they ain't gonna have nothing cause I ain't done nothing."

When Thurston showed Craft a diagram showing where the girl suffered a tear on her genitals, he again denied involvement.

"You didn't do that?" Thurston asked him. "Is that what you're saying?"

"That's exactly what I'm saying," said Craft. "I didn't cause that."

Thurston presented evidence of prior bad acts by Craft before he was 15. He was adjudicated guilty in Clayton County Juvenile Court stemming from sexual assaults on two fellow students a month apart in 2009, said Thurston.

Jurors were allowed to hear testimony about the two incidents but Carter ruled they were not to know about the disposition of the cases.