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## Ex-Lake County sheriff's deputy set to face jury in child sex abuse case

By Jeremy Walsh -- Staff reporter

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SAN RAFAEL -- Opening statements are set for Monday in the Marin County trial of a former Lake County sheriff's deputy charged with more than a dozen counts of child sex abuse.

Attorneys in the case against Derik Dion Navarro completed jury selection on Tuesday, setting the stage for state prosecutors to begin presenting evidence during the upcoming week.

Navarro, 41, has pleaded not guilty to 16 felony charges of alleged sexual acts involving a minor, reportedly a female babysitter, between seven and eight years ago. He was a Lake County sheriff's deputy during the timeframe of the alleged incidents.

Navarro's employment with the department ended in April 2007, one week before his arrest on child sex abuse charges. The case has faced a number of delays in the interim, including attorney changes on both sides and a failed plea agreement.

The ex-deputy switched defense lawyers several times, and prosecution duties were handed to the California Attorney General's Office in 2011 when newly seated Lake County District Attorney Don Anderson declared a conflict. Anderson, elected in November 2010, previously represented Navarro during arbitration proceedings.

After state prosecutors took over, Navarro actually admitted to one felony count of unlawful intercourse with a minor as part of a December 2011 plea bargain ultimately rejected by a Lake County judge who deemed the deal too lenient.

Judge Andrew S. Blum said he could not sign off on the proposed sentence,

which called for four months in jail, formal probation and no sex-offender registration in exchange for the former deputy's lone guilty plea. The remaining 15 felony charges would have been dismissed. Navarro reinstated his pleas of not guilty to all 16 counts after the judge's decision in January 2012.

The defense successfully lobbied for a change of venue in the wake of the rebuffed plea bargain -- and the local coverage and public interest surrounding it. The case was transferred to Marin County Superior Court in May 2012.

The start of Navarro's Marin County jury trial faced several delays late last year and early this year before the jury-selection process got underway late last month. The attorneys finished picking 12 regular jurors and four alternates on Tuesday.

Opening statements are set to begin Monday morning with Judge James Chou presiding. David Druliner is prosecuting the case for the state Attorney General's Office. Lakeport defense attorney Mitchell Hauptman is representing Navarro, who is out of custody.

The parties estimate the trial will last until the end of the month, Druliner said.

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This case and those of accused pedophiles like Sylvain Kustyan, Ariel Castro and Jerry Sandusky underscore the need to stop these menaces to our children's welfare ASAP BEFORE they have decades to prey on our innocent children. Kustyan has been formally charged with two counts each of 1st Degree Sodomy and Sexual Abuse of a ten-year-old little boy. The others are now behind bars, but Kustyan, formerly of Tuscaloosa, AL and France, fled the US to avoid arrest, is now a fugitive from the law and is thought to be in Europe. Authorities have been unable to locate him since 1998. He was arrested in 2008.

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