



**Andrew A. Bain**  
**STATE ATTORNEY**  
NINTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
ORANGE AND OSCEOLA COUNTIES, FLORIDA

M. Ryan Williams  
CHIEF ASSISTANT STATE ATTORNEY

Jamie McManus  
DEPUTY CHIEF ASSISTANT STATE ATTORNEY

Kamilah Perry  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GENERAL COUNSEL

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Contact:**

Public Information Office  
415 N. Orange Ave  
Orlando, Fla. 32801

[PIO@sao9.org](mailto:PIO@sao9.org)

[SAO9th.com](http://SAO9th.com)

## **Man Convicted for Kidnapping, Rape and Attempted Murder**

**ORANGE COUNTY, Fla.** – An Orange County jury found Bruce Whitehead, 55, guilty of Sexual Battery with a Deadly Weapon, Attempted First Degree Murder with a Weapon, Kidnapping with Intent to Inflict Harm/Terror with a Weapon, Robbery with a Deadly Weapon, Aggravated Battery with a Deadly Weapon and Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon after he kidnapped, assaulted, stabbed and tried to kill a woman in Orange County in 2022.

On December 10, 2022, Whitehead approached the 22-year-old victim, who initially, willingly got into his car. At some point, Whitehead stopped the vehicle in a shopping plaza and forced the victim out of the car and into the back seat at knifepoint. He ordered her to lie down and covered her with a jacket. Whitehead drove the victim to a wooded area where he physically and sexually battered her, causing serious injuries. Whitehead's knife malfunctioned during an attempt to stab the victim in her chest. The victim grabbed Whitehead's arm in an effort to stop the attack. She began kicking him in his face and chest. The victim took this as her opportunity to escape and ran out of the woods, towards streetlights and the sounds of cars. She rang doorbells and eventually found someone to call 911 for her.

The Orange County Sheriff's Office investigated the case. Witnesses identified the vehicle Whitehead drove and recounted his admissions about the incident. GPS cellphone data, surveillance video and photographs confirmed the path of travel that the victim disclosed. Five days later, deputies located and arrested Whitehead. He was found walking down a highway. Fourteen months after his arrest, Whitehead attempted to hire a fellow inmate at the Orange County jail to assist him with convincing the victim not to prosecute.

During the trial, the prosecution presented evidence of Whitehead's violent criminal history. The State presented that in 1986, Whitehead was accused of rape and attempted murder of another unrelated woman in Jacksonville. The victim from that case testified, providing facts similar to those in the current case.

This is one of the first trials where a counselor from the Victim Service Center of Central Florida was present to assist before and after the victim's traumatic testimony. This was due in part to a pilot program launched by State Attorney Andrew Bain to make mental health services more accessible to victims going through the criminal justice system.

After a seven-day trial, the jury found Whitehead guilty as charged on all six counts. A sentencing date has been scheduled for July 2. He faces a 50-year minimum mandatory sentence as to count 1 and he could face up to life in prison as a Prison Release Reoffender.

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