

GUILTY PLEA IN RAPES OF SCHOOLGIRLS MAN FACES 30-50 YEARS FOR 6 DETROIT ASSAULTS

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As thousands of girls walked Detroit's streets, returning to classes Tuesday, **Desselonger Ross** pleaded guilty in Wayne County Circuit Court to sexually assaulting six students last year.

Three of the assaults were among nine schoolgirl rapes last fall that panicked students and parents across the city and led to the formation of volunteer and police patrols near schools in early morning hours.

Ross, 28, would prey on the girls on their way to school, often hiding behind vacant buildings or in shrubbery. Under his plea agreement with prosecutors, **Ross** will serve 30-50 years in prison. His sentencing date is Sept. 12.

At trial, he would have faced a mandatory sentence of life without parole upon conviction because of a previous sexual-assault felony conviction.

Robert Spada, assistant Wayne County prosecutor, said Wednesday that **Ross** confessed to the rapes and was identified by his victims and DNA samples. His trial was set for November, but **Ross** declined to proceed.

"The evidence was overwhelming against him," Spada said.

Police found three pairs of women's underwear when they searched his car.

Ross pleaded guilty to the following rapes, all on Detroit's east side. These accounts are based on court files.

- * Jan. 28, 1999 -- A 15-year-old girl was walking to school at East 7 Mile and Annott when she was tackled and punched. Her assailant said: "If you scream, I will shoot you." He dragged her to the back of a school, raped her and fled on foot.
- * Feb. 18, 1999 -- A 14-year-old girl was walking to school near Waltham, Lappin and Barlowe streets when she was approached by a man with a gun who said "Come with me." He took her to an alley and sexually assaulted her. He then ran away.
- * March 8, 1999 -- A 17-year-old girl was getting off a city bus at Conant and Halleck when a man approached her with a gun. He stated: "If you say anything, I'll blow your head off." He forced her behind a house in the 2900 block of McLean and raped her. He then ran away.

- * Oct. 14 -- A 17-year-old girl was walking to school in the 11600 block of Whitehall near Yorkshire when a man grabbed her and forced her behind a house. He punched and raped her, then ran away.
- * Oct. 18 -- A 15-year-old student was walking on Chalfonte near Prairie when she saw a man parked in a car. The man ran from the car, grabbed the girl and dragged her into an alley. He sexually assaulted her and ran away.
- * Oct. 22 -- A 14-year-old girl was walking to school in the 12200 block of Klinger when a man grabbed her and punched her. He then placed a hand over her mouth and said: "Don't say anything." He dragged her behind a house, raped her and ran away.

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