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Keanu Reeves takes witness stand, denies his car struck photographer

From wire reports

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Actor Keanu Reeves leaves the Stanley Mosk Courthouse in Los Angeles on Monday. A jury has been seated in a paparazzo's civil trial against Reeves, who is expected to testify Tuesday. (The Associated Press)

Keanu Reeves denied today that he knocked down and injured a paparazzo while trying to avoid having his picture taken, saying the man fell on his own while walking backward, then stumbling.

In his lawsuit, filed in November in Los Angeles Superior Court, Alison Silva maintains that his

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earning ability and job prospects have been diminished because of injuries suffered to his left wrist on March 19, 2007.

Reeves was behind the wheel of a black 1996 Porsche 911 Cabrio that struck him on Avenida Tranquila in Rancho Palos Verdes, Silva claims.

Reeves, who was covering his face, pulled away from the curb and "in a sudden, erratic and dangerous manner, drove forward and struck (Silva)," according to the photographer's lawsuit.

But Reeves -- during about an hour on the stand in which he used frequent hand gestures to illustrate his points -- testified that he did not pull away from the curb in an erratic manner and was not covering his face.

"Did you hit him?," Reeves' lawyer, Alfred W. Gerisch, asked the actor.

"No," Reeves replied.

"Are you sure of that?," Gerisch asked.

"Yes," Reeves said.

The confrontation began when Silva stood at the front of Reeves' car and blocked him from driving away, according to the 44-year-old star of "The Matrix" trilogy.

Reeves said the only time his car made contact with Silva was when the paparazzo bent over and put his hand on the hood of his car, then began stepping backward.

Reeves drew occasional chuckles from the audience when he appeared irritated at some of the questions posed to him by Silva's lawyer, Joseph Farzam.

The attorney asked if Reeves used hand signals or honked his horn to try to get Silva to move.

"He was in front of a starting car," Reeves testified. "It's common sense to me."

Reeves maintains that after the mishap, he returned to the home where he was visiting and asked someone to dial 911. Farzam maintains Reeves went to the home to visit his sister, who was being treated for an eating disorder.

Reeves testified that he brought Silva some water, but that it was not accepted. He said that while he was waiting for paramedics and sheriff's deputies to arrive, a man standing nearby asked Mr. Silva what happened.

Silva replied: "I am a paparazzo. He is a movie star. It was an accident," according to Reeves.

In a sworn declaration submitted in July, Reeves acknowledged that, as an actor, he is "often photographed in public both by professional photographers and by others."

Reeves said in the declaration that he did not know Silva before that day, but believed he was a member of the paparazzi "because of the aggressive manner in which he was photographing me as I walked toward my car, by which I mean repeated, multiple photographs using a strobe light."

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