

Peterson's demeanor could be his undoing

By Don Babwin

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CHICAGO » Drew Peterson might not take the stand if he goes to trial on charges alleging he killed his third wife, but his words could still play a big role as prosecutors try to put him away.

The former police officer, facing arraignment today on first-degree murder charges in the 2004 drowning death of ex-wife Kathleen Savio, has never shied from the media that has followed his every move since his fourth wife, Stacy, vanished in 2007 and he became a suspect in Savio's death.

In fact, he's seemed to relish the spotlight, often giving reporters a joke or smart-aleck remark — like smiling and calling his handcuffs “bling” when he was led to his first court appearance earlier this month.

And that, attorneys say, could be one of Peterson's biggest problems.

“If one wife goes missing and [another] wife is dead, those aren't usually the subject of jokes,” said Roy Black, a defense attorney whose clients have included Rush Limbaugh



David Pierini, Chicago Tribune

Drew Peterson shouted, “Look at my bling” while going to an arraignment for the murder of his third wife.

and William Kennedy Smith. “People are going to think this is a very bizarre person, who's more likely to have committed murder than someone who is in mourning.”

Peterson is accused of drowning Savio, who was found dead in a dry bathtub in 2004 with a gash on the back of her head. Her death was initially ruled an accident, but after Stacy Peterson went missing, Savio's body was exhumed and authorities ruled her death a homi-

cide staged to look like an accident.

Marilyn Brenneman, a senior deputy prosecutor in Seattle's King County, once won a murder conviction after showing jurors a video of a news conference given by a man charged in a drowning death.

“We used it to show his attitude was blase,” she said. “He was kind of wooden and didn't show any emotion. ... That is not really an appropriate response.”

Peterson's attorney said joking around is how his client deals with stress.

“In a tight, uncomfortable situation, you're gonna get humor and wise cracks,” said attorney Joel Brodsky, who is expected to ask a judge today to reduce Peterson's bail, which is set at \$20 million.

Peterson said he wouldn't behave any other way.

“Would it be better if I hid my head down and tried to hide my face and hunched and had tears in my eyes?” he asked NBC's Matt Lauer during a telephone interview aired on *Today* on Friday. “I mean, no, that's just not me.”