

# Girl, 5, mauled by pit bull

By Jeremy Gerner  
Tribune staff reporter

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A 5-year-old girl was mauled in a pit-bull attack this morning in the Back of the Yards neighborhood on the South Side, Chicago police said.

The child "suffered severe lacerations to the left side of her face, including her left eye, and severe lacerations to the back of her head," said Deering District Capt. Robert Johnson. She was reported in "stable" condition this morning at Holy Cross Hospital.

The girl, whom authorities declined to identify, was mauled by the dog around 8:15 a.m. at 53rd and Honore Streets, Johnson said. About 15 minutes later, police at 52nd Street and Winchester Avenue found the dog covered in blood, he said.

The dog was turned over to the Chicago Commission on Animal Care and Control, where it will be tested for rabies. Representatives from the commission could not be reached for comment.

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# Crowd beats dog to stop mauling

## 5-year-old injured in pit-bull attack in Back of the Yards

By Michelle S. Keller, Tribune staff reporter. Tribune staff reporter Jeremy Gorner contributed to this report

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Hanna Walker felt helpless as she and several neighborhood children continued to strike a pit bull that had her 5-year-old "niece" clenched in its jaws Wednesday morning.

Despite repeated wallops with a wooden mop handle and screams from the schoolchildren standing nearby, the dog did not let go of Zaria Junius' scalp and shook the kindergartner violently, witnesses said.

"I wanted to cry, but I had to stay strong," said Walker, 23.

Just as the handle splintered over the dog's back, a man in a silver car drove up to the corner of 53rd and South Honore Streets, took a pipe wrench from his car and smacked the dog hard on the ribs, releasing the child from its jaws.

Walker clutched Zaria's hand and the two sped into Walker's car before the dog could attack again.

Zaria "suffered severe lacerations to the left side of her face, including her left eye, and severe lacerations to the back of her head," from the attack in Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood, said Deering District Capt. Robert Johnson.

Paramedics took Zaria to Holy Cross Hospital, where she underwent facial surgery, family members said.

Police found the dog covered with blood about 8:30 a.m. at 52nd Street and Winchester Avenue, Johnson said. The dog was turned over to the city's Commission on Animal Care and Control and is being tested for rabies.

The nearly year-old, 42-pound, tan-colored male pit bull will be held for a 10-day observation period to determine if it has rabies, according to officials. It is not yet known if the dog had been vaccinated because it is a stray.

Zaria, of the 5200 block of South Winchester, and her cousin, Angel Walker, 11, were walking to a school bus stop around 8 a.m. Wednesday when the girls, and other children nearby, caught sight of the pit bull and tried to run away, said 12-year-old Kevin Dunn, who witnessed the attack.

"I was in the house with my daddy when he saw all the kids running around," Kevin said.

The children ran up a porch across from Kevin's house to get away from the dog and then scattered, running in different directions.

As Zaria attempted to flee, she slipped on a patch of ice and the animal "grabbed her head and started shaking it," Kevin said.

Kevin and his cousin Johnny Felder, 16, grabbed a mop handle from their home and began striking the dog, Felder said.

"There was a whole lot of blood on her face," Dunn said. "She was bleeding on her face. It looked like he had bitten hard and then locked on."

Hanna Walker, who wanted to make sure the two girls got on the bus, was nearby in her car when Angel, her niece, ran screaming toward her.

Walker said she tried to pull Zaria from the dog's clenched jaws but began panicking as the dog continued to shake Zaria's head.

Then the man, who has not been identified, came and struck the dog with the wrench, freeing Zaria.

For Walker, whom Zaria calls Auntie, those agonizing minutes are burned into her memory.

"People should keep their animals locked up," Walker said. "Stuff like that shouldn't happen. It's just playing in my head over and over again."

Alonzo Deans, who lives with Zaria's mother, Shirley Junius, said the girl was going to be OK. "She was calmer than we were," he said from the hospital.

Ivy Burnom, Zaria's teacher at Mays Academy, 838 W. Marquette Rd., said many of the children will be making get-well cards for Zaria.

Burnom said she is considering having someone from the Fire or Police Department come talk to her class about what to do to avoid being attacked by dogs.

Anne Kent, director at Animal Care and Control, said that if the pit bull tests positive for rabies, it will have to be euthanized. But if it does not, its fate depends on the findings of a commission investigation. A city ordinance requires that an animal-care investigator interview witnesses to determine what provoked the attack, Kent said.

If it is determined the dog is dangerous and if someone claims it, the owner would have to muzzle the dog, keep it fenced in with a warning sign and attend obedience training, Kent said.

The owner would also have to purchase a \$100,000 insurance policy for the animal.

Zaria was in the recovery room after surgery at around 5 p.m. Wednesday and was listed in "good condition," said Mary Lu Thome, nursing supervisor at Holy Cross.

Walker said she was grateful to the boys who helped her and especially to the man whose name she does not know.

"He didn't have to help; a lot of people wouldn't," she said. "I'm just real grateful he did."

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