

Recordings turned over in Simpson case

By Kathleen Hennessey, Associated Press Writer

LAS VEGAS — A key witness has turned over hours of audio recordings in the O.J. Simpson armed robbery and kidnapping case, his lawyer said Saturday.

Tom Riccio, who had arranged the meeting between Simpson and two sports memorabilia dealers in Las Vegas hotel room, gave several recordings held at his Los Angeles home to police on Friday, Riccio's attorney Ryan Okabe said. Okabe would not confirm what was on the recordings.

A television news crew videotaped police detectives carrying black plastic bags of evidence from Riccio's home, but detectives would not discuss the investigation.

A Las Vegas police spokesman did not return a call for comment.

"Whatever Mr. Riccio has, the police have," Okabe said. "He's cooperating fully and completely with the Las Vegas police department and the district attorney's office."

Riccio planted a recording device in the hotel room where Simpson and a group of associates allegedly held up two memorabilia dealers at gunpoint Sept. 13.

He then leaked audio of the incident to the celebrity gossip Web site TMZ.com.

The recording and the leak led some to accuse Riccio of "setting up" Simpson.

Riccio's attorney said Saturday his client recorded the meeting because he didn't trust one of the memorabilia dealers involved, Alfred Beardsley, and frequently recorded his dealings with him. Several hours of those recordings are now in police custody, Okabe said.

"Mr. Riccio has been burned by Alfred Beardsley in the past. Whenever he dealt with him, he recorded it, for his own protection," Okabe said, declining to describe Riccio's past business deals with Beardsley.

Both men frequently trade in Simpson memorabilia, and both have served prison time for felonies.

Beardsley, 46, was being held without bail in a Las Vegas jail Saturday, after being taken into custody Wednesday for a parole violation out of California.

Beardsley and another dealer, Bruce Fromong, claim Simpson and a group of men barged into the hotel room at the Palace Station casino and demanded the

dealers turnover autographed footballs and other items. Two of the men had handguns, police said.

Riccio said he arranged the meeting between the dealers and a "private collector," without letting on that the collector was Simpson and that he planned to seize the items. Simpson has said he believes they were stolen from him.

Riccio has said he did not know Simpson would show up at the hotel with a crew of five men and did not know the men would have weapons.

"This was in no way a set up," Okabe said.

One of the men suspected of brandishing a gun during the confrontation has been released on house arrest, jail records posted Saturday show.

Michael McClinton, of Las Vegas, had been held at the Clark County Detention Center since his arrest Tuesday. It was not clear when he was released. His attorney did not return a call seeking comment.