

Young-gun attorneys earning respect of bar

By Bill Sanders
Staff Writer

They've heard it all. Young whippersnappers. Green. Wet behind the ears.

And it's all true to an extent. If you walked through the Augusta district attorney's office, you'd think you had just interrupted a class field trip.

But they're not students or even interns. They're prosecutors. Five recent additions to the office, all twentysomething, are winning convictions against drug dealers, child molesters and rapists.

They're the young guns of a sort.

"I don't think there's any question that this group of attorneys is capable of trying difficult cases," said District Attorney Danny Craig, 38, who graduated from law school in 1979.

"It seems to me, and to a lot of attorneys my age and older, that law school graduates today are more qualified than the ones even 10 years ago."

Mr. Craig said today's law school grads spend more time in actual trial settings, learning firsthand what goes on in a courtroom.

"They don't get overwhelmed

handling tough cases, and they seem to get the respect from the rest of the bar," Mr. Craig said. "I think most defense attorneys, because of the talent the schools are turning out now, give young attorneys respect right away. Then, those young ones have to live up to it and keep the respect."

Two of the young attorneys — Stacey Kasten and Vince Crawford — have tried enough cases to establish themselves as good prosecutors with the ability to be great ones.

Miss Kasten recently tried her first murder case. It took all of two hours. After a short deliberation, the jury returned its verdict: Guilty.

"Prosecutors shouldn't be judged on their won-loss record, because anybody could have a good record if they tried only the real strong cases," Miss Kasten said. "But it was nice to win my first murder case."

Enthusiasm bursts from Mr. Craig every time Mr. Crawford's name comes up.

"He brings with him a level of maturity that's a breath of fresh air," Mr. Craig said. "He was the first lawyer I had a chance to

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MATTHEW CRAIG STA

The five new prosecutors working out of the district attorney office are (clockwise from top left) Vince Crawford, John Markwalter, Bill Davison, Stacy Kasten and Joseph Neal Jr.

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