

Jury Clears Teen Of Party Rape

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HARRISONBURG - A Rockingham County jury acquitted a Harrisonburg teen Wednesday accused of raping a 15-year-old girl last year at a party.

During a two-day trial in Rockingham County Circuit Court, the jury of seven women and five men found Weylin Holmes, 19, not guilty of felony rape, felony abduction and two felony counts of sodomy.

Judge Bruce Albertson dismissed a felony sexual object penetration charge before the case went to the jury.

Holmes' mother, Tonya Brandon, said she was grateful for the outcome. She said her son had been degraded on social media sites for the past year.

"It's been rough," said Brandon, tears flowing as she spoke in front of the courthouse following the verdict. "Justice is served. I want the whole world to know my son is not guilty."

'Selective Memory'

With no physical evidence, such as DNA, the case came down to credibility.

During closing arguments, defense attorney John Holloran referenced what he said were the complainant's inconsistent statements.

"She has tremendous selective memory," he said, adding that his client has claimed the sex between the two had been consensual.

Holloran also noted the girl had consumed alcohol and smoked marijuana beforehand.

During the prosecution's closing arguments, Assistant Rockingham County Commonwealth's Attorney Cristabel Opp said, despite the defense's claim during trial, the alleged victim wasn't making the claim for notoriety.

Holmes, a senior at the time, was a wide receiver for the Harrisonburg High School football team.

"This is not a drama queen," said Opp, who noted that the defendant gave three versions of what occurred, including one in which he said nothing happened. "This is someone reliving trauma. This is not someone seeking attention. This is a victim."

The case began when the girl spoke to a school resource officer about the incident on Feb. 4, 2013.

The girl, now 16, told the officer the incident occurred Feb. 2, 2013, when Holmes, an HHS senior at the time, asked her to go to a friend's apartment in University Fields, a housing complex on Port Republic Road near James Madison University.

On Tuesday, the girl testified that she told Holmes she did not want to have sex but he forced her to.

The defense, however, countered her claims with Twitter messages posted at the time.

On the day of the alleged offense, Holmes tweeted the girl, saying she was his best friend and included "a bunch of hearts." Holloran presented evidence that the girl retweeted the message the next day.

Credibility Questioned

On Wednesday, the defense took over the case, calling several witnesses, including one who testified the girl left the party and eventually sent a text to someone saying she had been raped.

Lainey Raynes, 23, of Harrisonburg, testified for the defense that she drove the girl to Sentara RMH Medical Center to have a rape kit performed. Raynes said the alleged victim had been hesitant about going into the hospital the night of the party.

"Every time I tried to get her to come in, she'd come up with a different excuse," Raines said. "I became really frustrated. I said, 'If it's a joke, it could ruin this boy's life.'"

The girl submitted to an examination two days later.

Rachel Defriece, 19, of Harrisonburg, a friend of the accuser's sister, said the alleged victim's demeanor didn't change after the party.

"Everything was pretty much the same," said Defriece, adding that a week later the girl asked to go to a party with her. "I thought it was kind of weird."

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