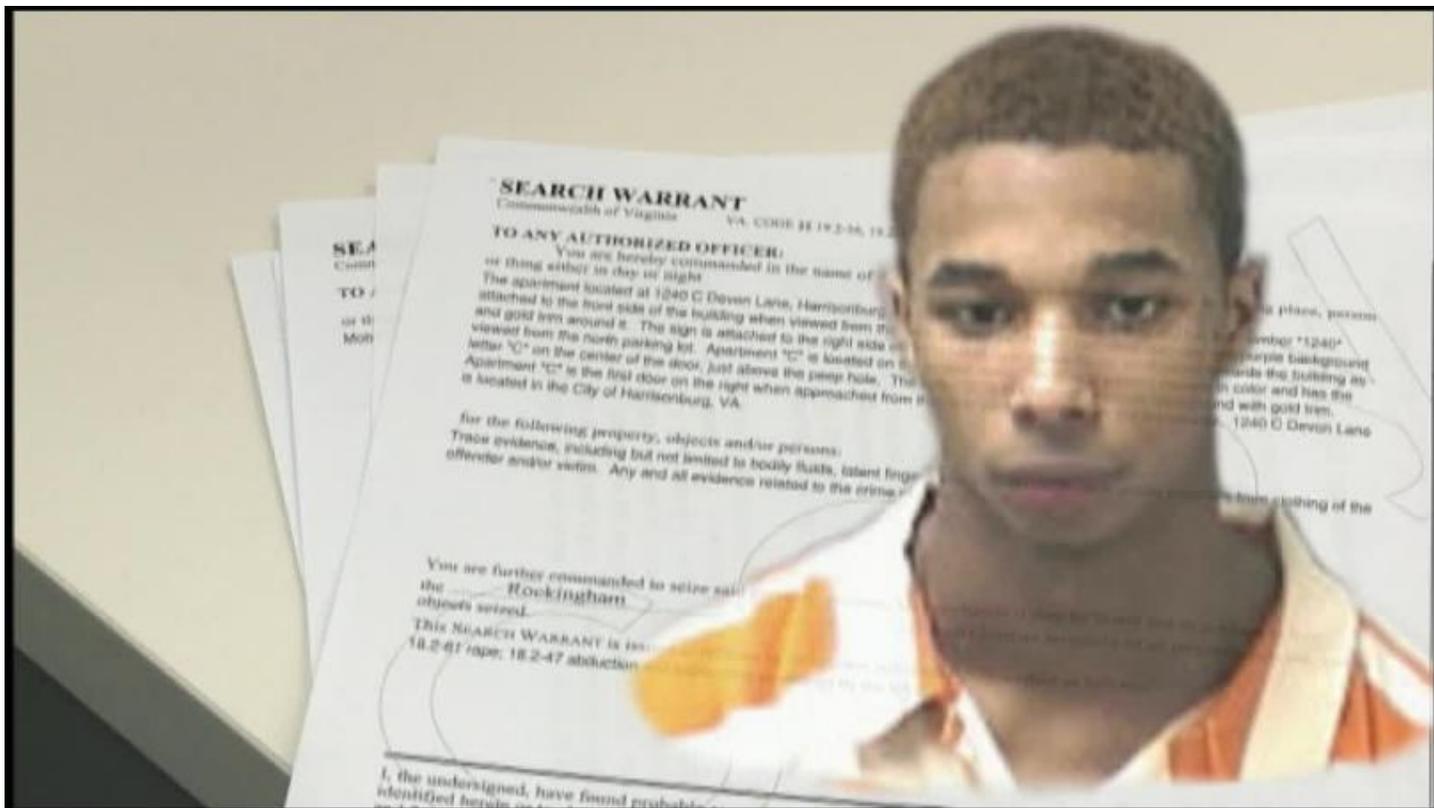


BREAKING: Jury Delivers Not Guilty Verdict in Holmes Trial



By Carly Stephenson | Posted: Wed 10:39 AM, Apr 02, 2014 | Updated: Mon 2:54 PM, Aug 17, 2015

HARRISONBURG, Va. (WHSV) -- UPDATE 7:54 P.M. -- The jury has acquitted Weylin Holmes, the former Harrisonburg High School football player, of all charges. The jury acquitted Holmes of abduction, forcible oral sodomy, forcible anal sodomy and rape.

Holme's mother Tonya Brandon described her experience leading up to the trial as difficult.

Brandon said, "It's been rough, I've had Twitter, people downing my kids on Facebook, it's been rough, it's been a rough year and a half. And I knew that my son, hey, justice is served, the truth came out. And I want the whole world to know that my son is not guilty."

The trial for Weylin Holmes, the former Harrisonburg High School football player accused of rape is now in the hands of the jury.

As of 6 p.m. on Wednesday, the jury had already been deliberating for more than an hour as both sides stayed in to wait for a verdict.

During Wednesday's proceedings, multiple witnesses for the defense testified. Also, one of the five indictments, inanimate sodomy was dropped, so the jury won't be able to consider that charge anymore.

One of the witnesses, a 23-year-old named Lainey Raynes, said that the alleged victim was her responsibility on February 2nd, 2013, the night of the parties. Raynes said she took her to Rockingham Memorial Hospital, but the girl didn't want to go in. When she wouldn't go in Raynes testified that she said, "If it was a joke it wasn't funny. That she could ruin this boy's life if she was lying or trying to cover something up." Raynes said the now 16-year-old said that she wanted to go back to the Commons apartment complex, where one of the parties had been.

Instead, Raynes said she drove her home. Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Christabel Op said that there is forensic evidence from days later that shows physical damage to the alleged victim.

Another witness, Shakira Simmers, who was with the 16-year-old for some of the night, talked about what the teenager had brought with her to drink. Later, Simmers said she didn't go to the police about the accusation. Instead, she says she received phone calls saying she should "go talk to" the defense attorney.

Brad Johnson, another witness for the defense, said the alleged victim spoke with him on the phone days after February 2nd. Johnson says he asked, "Why are you doing this to Weylin when you know it's not true?"

Johnson said the 16-year-old said, "I can't take it back now, they're wanting to prosecute him," when Johnson asked the alleged victim about the rape. Johnson also said the two, Weylin and the alleged victim, had been to a party months before grinding on each other. That testimony would not be consistent with the prosecution's case, that the two hadn't really interacted much before. Johnson also said that he knew the accuser.

He said they sent each other texts and had "talked for about two weeks, for about a month." Johnson also said she sent sexual texts, but when asked, he said he didn't have the sexual texts anymore.

Another witness, Hanna Foster, took the stand to follow-up on claims that other witnesses had been sharing facts about the case outside of the courtroom. After Op questioned her, she said, "there was definitely an air of comparing stories and checking."

Foster said, "I heard one of them ask the other, did you get a script? And they said yes."

Multiple witnesses Tuesday confirmed they had talked about rumors surrounding the case. Judge Bruce Albertson brought witnesses into the courtroom individually to ask about any conversations outside of the courtroom.

During closing statements, Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Op called Holmes a liar and said he denied even having sex with the alleged victim at first. Defense attorney John Holloran spoke about one of Holmes's interviews with investigators after the alleged incident. Holloran says Weylin told the investigator that "she's saying it for attention, I don't want to have my life ruined." Holloran also said that the girl mentioned having red marks on her afterward, that she had "never brought" up before.

During the trial, the defense characterized the alleged victim as wanting attention and being a drama queen, after one witness said that the alleged victim was getting a lot of attention at school afterward and didn't seem upset. Rachel DeFriece, a witness, said that the accuser wanted to go to a party with her and a couple of other people. DeFriece said she "thought it was kinda weird."

Op responded to claims that this was all for attention.

"She never once sought attention. Everyone who interviewed her had to seek her out." said Op.

The defense also played back audio of a past interview with the alleged victim, which talked about walking into the bedroom where the alleged incident happened. In the recording, the alleged victim said, "he walked in first" and she said she followed. Tuesday, she had said that she was kind of tugged into the room.

Investigator Greg Miller also took the stand to go over multiple interviews he had conducted with the accuser. At one point in the interview, Miller asked if the accuser thought that there would "be any point that he would think that you were ok" with any of the stuff happening. According to the report transcript read in court, she said "I guess in his head." When asked, Miller described the accuser as quiet and timid during the interview.

The alleged victim's attorney, Christabel Op, said in closing statements on the stand that the now 16-year-old, "Shut down. This is not a drama queen, this is someone who is reliving a trauma." Op explained that it would be hard to go through and remember questions from more than a year ago. Holloran said that he agreed that she shut down, but stated it was because she was being confronted with the truth."

Op recalled how the alleged victim acted when she had been on the stand for hours.

"You didn't hear her because she cried without making a sound," said Op.

Below is a collection of Carly Stephenson's tweets from inside the courtroom.