

Ex-Cats' teen rape charge dropped

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An ex-Black Cats' star accused of rape today spoke out after the case against him was dropped.

Former Sunderland goalkeeper Ben Alswick was arrested and questioned by police after an 18-year-old alleged she had been attacked at a house in the city.

But the case against the 20-year-old, and former teammate Liam Lawrence, has now been wound up.

Alswick, who left the Stadium of Light for Tottenham Hotspur in a 900,000 deal in January, said: "This case should never have been brought against me in the first place.

"It was a wholly false accusation and I'm delighted that common sense has prevailed and that the case has been thrown out."

Alswick, originally from Seaham, had been on police bail after he and Lawrence, 25, were arrested and quizzed by Northumbria Police in May.

Now, the young England Under-21 footballer says he is hoping to put the whole matter behind him so he can concentrate on his Premiership career.

He added: "As a footballer, I know the profession comes with responsibility. I was 19 at the time and I will take a big lesson from the experience.

"I want to thank my family, friends, and Spurs who have supported me throughout. Now, I just want to concentrate on making my career with Spurs as successful as possible, which is all I have ever wanted to do."

Midfielder Lawrence left Sunderland last November to join Stoke City, initially on loan, but made the move permanent in January.

Stoke City said they would not be making any comment in relation to the matter.

Alwick, who has been tipped as a significant international and Premiership prospect, played 22 games for Sunderland, including seven Premiership fixtures during the 2005/06 season - the same season the Black Cats were relegated.

While Lawrence has been named in several Republic of Ireland international squads but has yet to be capped by his country.

The decision to transfer the pair out of the Stadium of Light is understood to have had nothing to do with the allegation made against them.

Both players had been due to answer their bail at the end of this month.

Northumbria Police spokesman said: "A decision has been reached on this matter and will be made public soon."

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