

THE NEW ORLEANS ADVOCATE

Tulane settles sexual assault lawsuit against two former football players

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Tulane University has settled a lawsuit that accused two former Green Wave football players of raping a young woman inside a dorm room — a case that has been cloaked in secrecy since the woman went to the police more than four years ago.

Terms of the settlement were not disclosed, and recent court filings say only that "all matters have been settled and resolved." Additional details — like much of the case — were filed under seal in Orleans Parish Civil District Court.

The lawsuit accused Tulane of failing to protect a high school senior from being sexually assaulted on campus in April 2014 after a university-sponsored recruiting event that gave way to a night of binge drinking.

New Orleans police booked one of the players, Niguel "Teddy" Veal, on a rape count, saying the woman had been "in a state of inebriation which didn't allow her to have knowledge that (Veal) was having sex with her."

A sex crimes detective pointed to text messages the woman sent at the time that suggested the intercourse occurred "without her knowledge."

Orleans Parish District Attorney Leon Cannizzaro refused to prosecute the case shortly before the start of the 2014 football season, saying his office did not have enough evidence to prove the woman's allegations beyond a reasonable doubt.

Veal, a standout wide receiver at the time, was reinstated to the team but later transferred to Louisiana Tech.

A second player named in the lawsuit, Raul "Junior" Diaz, told police he had consensual sex with the woman in his dorm room. He was never arrested or charged. Diaz, a former Green Wave center, recently transferred to Florida Atlantic University.

The New Orleans Advocate has not identified the young woman, who filed the lawsuit using a pseudonym in an effort to protect her privacy.

Her attorney, John Denenea Jr., of New Orleans, declined to comment on the outcome of the case.

Tulane did not respond to a request for comment Monday.

On the night of the alleged rape, the woman went out drinking with Tulane women's basketball players and at least one other high school recruit. A female basketball player serving as a chaperone for the recruits allegedly bought drinks for the group and gave the woman a fake identification to get into a bar.

The woman told police she later awakened to find Veal raping her in a dorm room. She initially told detectives she had consensual sex with Diaz, but her lawsuit said she had been too intoxicated to consent to any sexual activity that night.

Tulane conducted a lengthy investigation that cleared Veal of wrongdoing and essentially determined the woman's claim of sexual assault was false. The university, citing federal privacy laws, declined to discuss the inquiry or a voluminous report that has not been made public.

The university also fought to litigate the woman's lawsuit behind closed doors, prompting intervention by The Times-Picayune, which opposed the university's effort to "keep all pleadings, exhibits, affidavits and transcripts of these proceedings under seal."

Former Civil District Judge Tiffany Chase refused to clear her courtroom but still allowed many significant filings in the case to be made under seal. Chase has since been elected to the state 4th Circuit Court of Appeal.

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