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Mobile video clears rape accused

A woman who falsely accused four men of rape has been given six months youth custody after one of the accused filmed her intimate lap dance on his mobile.



Sannino had been drinking to excess, the court heard

Police detained the four for 36 hours after Cinzia Sannino, 18, from Llanishen, Cardiff made the rape claim.

But they were freed after the mobile video was produced. Sannino's conduct was called "evil" by a judge at Cardiff Crown Court.

Sannino admitted attempting to pervert the course of justice.

Sentencing her, Judge Roderick Evans KT told Sannino he had "no doubt" she had had voluntary, consensual intercourse with the four.

"Before(hand), you performed a lap dance and allowed them to touch you intimately.

Lift home

"Fortunately for them someone recorded part of your behaviour on his mobile phone.

"Some people would say that your conduct was more than foolish and ill-advised - it was evil," he added.

The court heard Sannino met the four friends, aged between 20 and 28, at a Cardiff bar before going back to one of their houses.

She stripped naked to perform a private lap-dance and was filmed "encouraging" the men to have sex with her.

But the next morning she phoned police to ask for a lift home. When they refused she claimed she had been raped and police began their investigation.

Dizzy

Prosecutor Chris Lewis told the court the men gave police "remarkably similar stories".

The men said Sannino began to lap-dance for them of her own volition and removed her clothes until she was entirely naked, he said.

"They told police she then invited them to have sex with her. One of the men filmed the dancing on his mobile phone camera."

The court heard Sannino told police she had danced for the men but had stayed fully clothed.

She alleged she had felt dizzy and had fallen asleep - but woke up the next morning to find one of the men having sex with her.

Sannino claimed another man was in the room and she thought he had also had sex with her.

She told police she felt she had been drugged before being raped by the two men.

Sannino then phoned police asking for a lift, but when they refused she claimed she had been raped.

A large-scale investigation was launched involving three doctors, a forensic team, and a recently-shut police station was reopened.

'Completely over-awed'

But when police showed her the mobile phone footage she immediately withdrew her complaint. The men were released after 36 hours in police custody.

Defending, Peter Wormald said Sannino had got drunk to an excess she was not used to.

"She was in the company of a group of older men who were used to drinking more than she was and she became heavily intoxicated.

"She is a young woman completely overawed by what she has brought upon herself."

A spokeswoman for the False Allegations Support Organisation welcomed the sentence, adding: "Up to now girls who falsely accuse have had nothing done to them.

"I would welcome this course of action because at the moment there are too many people jumping on the bandwagon as they are aware they can get compensation for false accusations.

"It's not fair on the girls who have actually been raped."