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Student spared jail for false rape claim

By Neil Hunter



SPARED JAIL: Hannah Byron, 20, who falsely accused a man of rape

A STUDENT whose false rape claim led to an innocent man being arrested and held for nine hours walked free from court yesterday.

Hannah Byron, 20, was told by a judge at Teesside Crown Court that she had avoided an immediate jail sentence “by a short whisker”.

Last night, police condemned Byron for putting the man through hell and wasting their time – and possibly putting off genuine victims.

Byron said she had been raped after she had been seen flirting outside The Keys, in Yarm, near Stockton, during a night out in March last year.

She said the man had attacked her on a bridge, thrown money at her to get a taxi home and gave police a description of him.

A suspect was detained and interrogated, but provided police with evidence to show he had not raped the psychology student.

The court heard that Byron, then studying at Teeside University, was trying to win back a former boyfriend with the claim.

Her barrister, Brian Russell, described it as extremely foolish behaviour and urged the judge to depart from the usual punishment of prison.

After the case, PC James Emery, of Cleveland Police, said: “The innocent victim of the defendant’s malicious report has been put through an enormous amount of stress, having found himself arrested, detained and questioned at length for an allegation that has now been proven to be fictitious.

“That victim is relieved that these matters are now at an end and he can now move on with his life.

“Such allegations are a drain on police resources and put further unnecessary pressures on the police’s ability to respond to the community’s needs. Not only this, there is a further concern that genuine victims of sexual assaults might be put off from approaching the police.

“We would like to reiterate that we continue to treat all such allegations seriously and wish to reassure the community that such reports will always be taken seriously and will be fully and properly investigated.”

Mr Russell said that once Byron had told her former boyfriend of the alleged attack, it snowballed and she could not back out of it.

He said: “Although this offence on her record will now inhibit her career, she still wants to build a bright future for herself.”

Byron, of Eldon Street, York, admitted an act tending or intended to pervert justice when she was about to go on trial in March.

She was given a 12-month jail sentence, suspended for two years, with supervision and 150 hours of unpaid work.

<https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/9700226.student-spared-jail-for-false-rape-claim/>