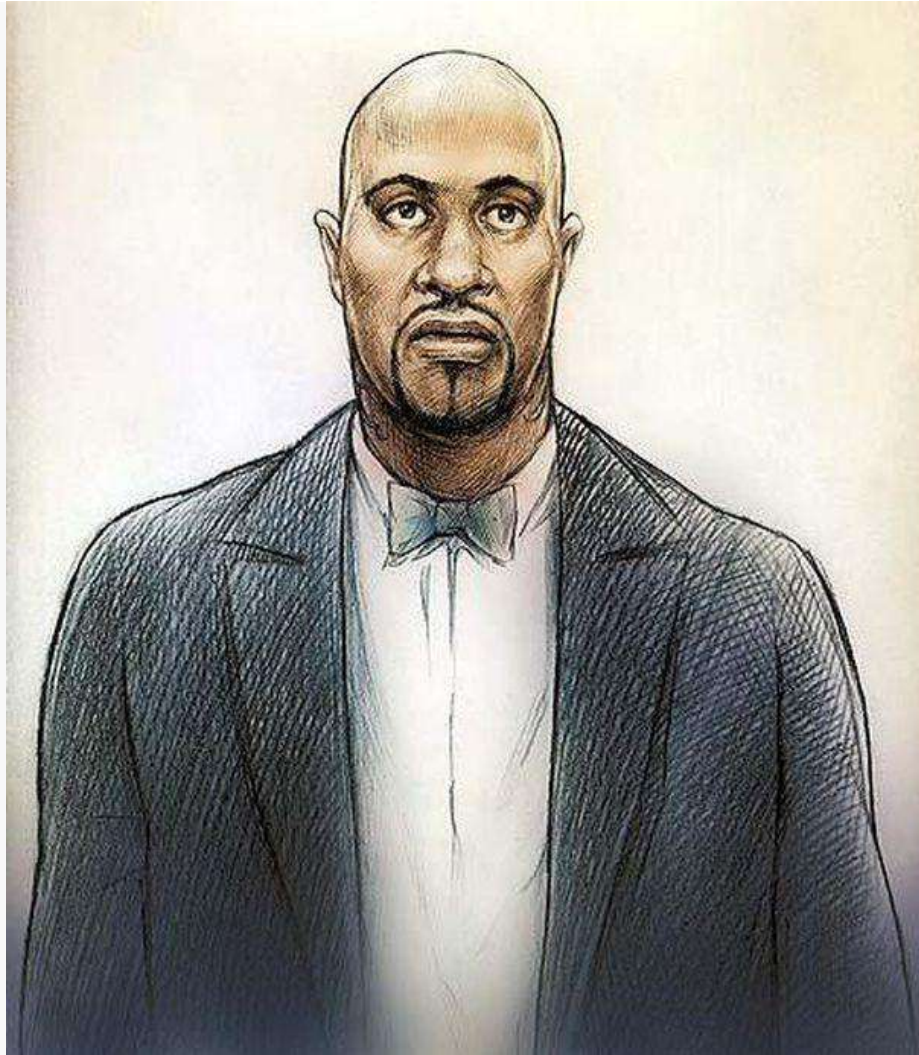


THE STAR



ARGOOS

Ex-Argo acquitted in rape trial

By Paola Loriggio Staff Reporter
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Ex-Toronto Argonaut Bernard Williams was cleared this afternoon of sexually assaulting a woman after a night of partying almost three years ago.

Justice John MacDonald found evidence presented during the three-day trial wasn't sufficient to convict Williams, 36.

There was "clear evidence of invention or imagined events" in the woman's testimony, due to the excessive alcohol she consumed, the judge said as he delivered the verdict.

"The Crown has failed to prove the charge beyond reasonable doubt."

Williams and then-teammate Jonathan Brown had gone clubbing in August 2006 with the woman and her friend Ashley Bonar, a former Argos cheerleader. After downing shots and cocktails at a downtown bar, the group continued to drink and smoke marijuana at Bonar's Etobicoke home.

The woman eventually went to bed, and said she woke up while Williams was raping her.

Testifying this morning, Williams vehemently denied having any sexual contact with the woman.

"Did you do this, Bernard?" defence lawyer John Struthers asked, alluding to the rape charge.

"I didn't do this – I wouldn't do anything like this," Williams replied.

The now-retired football player said he was coming out of the bathroom around dawn when he heard a thud from the bedroom where the woman was sleeping.

He found her halfway off the bed, naked from the waist down, he testified.

Covering her bare parts with a blanket for modesty's sake, Williams slipped his hands under her shoulders and hips to hoist her back on the bed, he said.

That's when she woke up and started "screaming racial epithets" at him, Williams said.

The woman previously testified she felt Williams's penis thrusting in and out of her vagina when she woke up, even noting that he wore a condom.

DNA evidence found on her body did not match a genetic sample provided by Williams.

The defence argued the woman was intoxicated, and grew confused when she saw Williams.

But the Crown maintains she was coherent in spite of the alcohol and drugs.

Williams, a defensive linesman, played with the Argos for four years. He now lives in Atlanta, Ga.

https://www.thestar.com/sports/football/argos/2009/02/25/exargo_acquitted_in_rape_trial.html