

Soccer coach is found not guilty of rape Will apply to get coaching license back, he says

By Deseret News Aug 20, 1999, 12:00am MDT
Derek Jensen staff writer

Michael Joseph Williams said he is ready to move on with his life after a jury found him not guilty Thursday of raping a girl he coached on a youth soccer team.

"I'm very grateful to my attorneys here, and grateful to the jury for seeing the truth," Williams said outside a 3rd District courtroom, a broad smile on his face. "Obviously it's been very difficult, but hopefully I can get on with my life." Williams, 28, said he will apply to get his coaching license back, but added, "I don't see myself coaching women again."

Williams was released from his position with the Utah Youth Soccer Association after the charges surfaced in November 1998.

A 17-year-old girl accused Williams of raping her at his Sugar House home on July 23, 1998.

After over two hours of deliberation, the jury of four men and four women found Williams not guilty of rape, a first-degree felony. The girl and her family were not in the courtroom when the verdict was read.

Defense attorney Rebecca Hyde said holes in the girl's testimony led to William's acquittal.

During her closing arguments, Hyde said the girl testified she received four calls from a friend on her cell phone the night of the alleged rape. During the trial that friend testified she never called the girl that night.

Hyde said the girl also testified she left the house about 15 minutes after putting her clothes back on, but told detectives in November 1998 she ran out the door right after getting dressed.

"Her story was inconsistent," Hyde said. "A lot of what she said was just not plausible."

Defense attorneys spent much of Wednesday attacking the girl's credibility, but their most powerful argument for Williams' innocence came from a couple who said they saw and talked to Williams at a shaved ice stand at 9400 South and Highland Drive during the time of the alleged rape on July 23, 1998.

The couple, whose son played goalie on a soccer team coached by Williams, both testified Williams was in line when they arrived just after 9:30 p.m. Both testified they talked with Williams until after the stand closed at 10 p.m.

The victim had testified earlier Wednesday that she was at Williams' home between 9:30 p.m. and 10:24 p.m.

Earlier Wednesday the victim grew agitated as defense attorneys continually probed into why she waited so long to report the rape to police and why she tried to contact Williams at least eight times afterward.

"I wanted to keep up the appearance that everything was OK and nothing had happened," was the girl's reply.

During his closing arguments, prosecutor James Cope pointed to a cellular phone bill with records of phone calls the girl allegedly made to Williams just before going to his home as proof that the girl's story had to be true.

"Somebody was there and answered the phone," Cope said, "and it wasn't a roommate, it wasn't an answering machine. It was the defendant."

Williams said he did not know why the girl accused him of raping her. During the trial the girl referred to Williams as a "bigger brother" who helped her get through her trials.

"I was her coach; I tried to help her out," Williams said. "But by no means did I ever have sex with this girl."

<https://www.deseret.com/1999/8/20/19461668/soccer-coach-is-found-not-guilty-of-rape-br-will-apply-to-get-coaching-license-back-he-says>