



INDEPENDENT

Cricketer cleared of regatta rape: Freed man attacks false allegations

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A CRICKETER was cleared yesterday of raping a 20-year-old woman near the Henley Regatta rowing course.

A jury at Oxford Crown Court reached a unanimous verdict of not guilty after hearing that Mark Bredell, 21, from Cape Town, went into a cornfield with the woman, whom he had not met before, after he had been drinking heavily on 4 July, the last day of the regatta.

Mr Bredell, who plays for South Africa's Western Province Colts, had told the jury he accidentally brushed shoulders against the girl as they walked in opposite directions along the crowded towpath. They smiled at each other and started chatting.

He said that he offered to take her on a short cut into the cornfield, where they kissed passionately. He admitted that his intention had been to find a secluded area with sexual intercourse in mind.

He said the woman had led the way and told him to lie down in the tall corn before removing his shorts and pants and getting on top of him. 'It was not a question of consenting to sex,' he told the jury. 'She took command.'

The woman said that she did not mind kisses and cuddles, but wanted it to go no further.

Sandra Stanfield, for the defence, had told the court four people had seen the couple in the field, but none had heard any screams. The woman had claimed she was screaming as she fell to the ground.

The jury, which had visited the scene along with the judge, barristers and the accused, was out for four hours before returning its verdict.

Mr Bredell was in Britain for six months on an exchange tour with Henley Cricket Club. As he left the court with his parents, he launched an attack on women who falsely cry rape.

Afterwards, clutching his belongings in a plastic prison bag, he said: 'It's nice to know that the truth really counts and that is the only thing that has kept me going the whole time.

'I've got no comment to make about the woman who made the allegation. I just feel sorry for real rape victims because I think this takes away from their ordeal.

'People that are raped deserve all the support they can get but I think some women are doing a lot of harm to rape victims by alleging they've been raped when it's not true.

'I don't feel that men are being victimised in rape cases, but I feel people jump to a lot of conclusions and other people could end up sitting in jail for a long time, and let me tell you it's not a pleasant experience,' Mr Bredell added.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/cricketer-cleared-of-regatta-rape-freed-man-attacks-false-allegations-1506970.html>