

Jury Finds Texas Football Players Liable in Sexual Assault of 14-Year-Old Girl, Awards \$32 Million

A jury in Denton, Texas, has found two former high school football players liable in the aggravated sexual assault of a 14-year-old girl, a ninth-grader at the time of the 2012 attack, and awarded a total of \$32 million.

The jury's Feb. 28 verdict, in District Judge Lee Ann Breeding's 462nd Judicial District Court, was unanimous.

Testimony indicated the attack took place at a student's home, where the girl reported that she was drugged and then raped by two athletes from Hebron High School in nearby Carrollton.

Jurors heard testimony in the case that the two boys had sex with the girl at the same time. One of the defendants testified that were he to encounter a girl as intoxicated as the victim again, he would behave the same way, according to plaintiff's lawyers.

The victim, who is not identified because she was a minor at the time of the sexual assault, was awarded \$7 million in actual damages and another \$25 million in punitive damages.

"I cannot begin to tell you what this verdict means to my client," said attorney **Charla Aldous** of **Aldous\Walker** in Dallas, who represents the victim. "She is a brave young woman who stood for what was right against all odds. My hope is that she will be a voice for sexual assault victims who are afraid to come forward and hold rapists responsible for their actions."

Also on the legal team for the young woman are Aldous\Walker trial lawyers **Brent Walker** and **Caleb Miller**.

At trial, one of the two defendants in the case testified that what happened between him and the victim was not a sexual assault, but consensual. His only regret, he told the jury, was that he "lost his virginity in that way." The other defendant testified by video deposition and asserted his Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination. Neither defendant has ever been arrested or charged with a crime in the case.

This was the second civil trial resulting from the attack. In 2014, the young woman and her family sued the Lewisville Independent School District over the harassment and bullying she experienced at school following the attack. But the jury in that case, in federal court in Sherman, declined to find the school district liable. Even so, that judge subsequently declared that the victim had been sexually assaulted.

The Denton case is *Paul Fletcher et al. v. A.V. and I.G.*, No. 14-10284-16, in the 462nd Judicial District Court in Denton County, Texas.