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Willingboro man acquitted in kidnapping and rape of township teen - News - Burlington County Times

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A Willingboro man was acquitted Monday of most of the charges against him, including kidnapping and aggravated sexual assault, in the alleged attack of a 14-year-old girl in Willingboro six years ago.

Rockmahne Chiles, 33, sat calmly at the defense table as the foreman of the Superior Court jury that had deliberated over four days at the Burlington County Courthouse in Mount Holly read the panel's partial verdict.

Chiles later could be seen hugging his wife and other supporters once the jury left the courtroom.

The jury of eight men and four women acquitted him of seven of the 10 charges, but could not reach a unanimous decision on the remainder.

Those charges included sexual contact with the victim's breast and endangering the welfare of a child. Judge Charles Delehey, who presided over the three-week trial, declared a mistrial on those counts.

The Burlington County Prosecutor's Office must decide whether to retry those counts, but defense attorney Robin Lord said she

believes they must be dismissed as a matter of law.

We're delighted he was found not guilty and the jury saw through the story, the fish tale, in this case, Lord said. Hopefully, jurors in the future realize that DNA is not always what the police and prosecutor want you to think it is.

The defense highlighted several areas of inconsistency in the victim's account of the alleged Jan. 30, 2007, attack and said DNA, if evaluated incorrectly, could be wrong and lead to the wrong suspect.

Authorities claimed that DNA, which they characterized as the best evidence in the case, found on the victim's body and clothes matched Chiles genetic profile. He was accused of abducting the girl, then a seventh-grader at the Levitt Middle School off Levitt Parkway, and sexually assaulting her in a nearby parking lot in a random attack.

The defense contended the girl concocted the story to get out of trouble with an admittedly strict father after she went missing for a few hours.

Lord told the jury that DNA is not an exact science and can be considered exact only when excluding someone as a contributor, not for positively identifying a suspect. She also raised doubt by pointing out that the semen found on the girl's pants contained no sperm. An expert defense witness said that could be explained if the man had a vasectomy, low or no sperm count, or had yet to hit puberty. Chiles wife testified that he was none of those and that the couple have a child together.

The jurors asked for this DNA testimony and others to be read back during the course of their deliberations. They also reviewed several

of the DNA charts produced as evidence, with one adamantly shaking his head no after looking over the information.

The defense was also able to create doubt by attacking the victim as a habitual liar and highlighting more than a handful of inconsistencies in her statements to police and in her trial testimony.

Burlington County Assistant Prosecutor Michael Luciano said while the woman, now a 20-year-old college student, was not a perfect witness, details of her account and descriptions she gave to police were supported by other evidence, including the DNA.

He asked the jury to question the odds of the DNA analysis being wrong and matching someone from the same town where the attack occurred.

We are extremely disappointed in the outcome, county Prosecutor Robert D. Bernardi said after the verdict. We will evaluate our positions with regard to retrial on the three remaining counts in due course.

During the trial, the victim told jurors she was walking home from school detention when she was approached by a man, pushed into a car, molested, and forced to perform oral sex on her attacker before he released her back onto Levitt Parkway.

Chiles remained free on \$200,000 bail since his 2007 arrest. Delehey continued his bail Monday while prosecutors decide on whether to retry the other charges.