

Fishtown man acquitted of gun charges at football game

By William Kenny
Times Staff Writer

A Philadelphia judge last week acquitted a Fishtown man of misdemeanor assault and related criminal

charges stemming from last year's incident when he pulled a gun on the coach of his son's Northeast-based pee-wee football team during a game.

The verdict by Municipal Court Judge Craig M. Washington brought to

Dead woman identified

Philadelphia police on Friday identified the body of a young woman found in a wooded area of Somerton early last week.

A man walking a dog along the 2100 block of Kubach Road found the body of Erika D. Brair, 18, of the 1400 block of E. Cheltenham Ave. in Oxford Circle, shortly after noon on April 16, said Officer Yolanda Dawkins of the police department's public affairs unit.

Kubach Road is a cul-de-sac intersecting with Hornig Road in the Byberry West Industrial Park.

The teen had been stabbed multiple times. Police did not disclose the placing or nature of the wounds. She may have been dead for days.

Police have named no suspects in the killing.

Capt. Michael Costello, commander of the police department's homicide unit, told the news media on Friday that the victim had been reported missing from her home for about a month, although investigators had been told of multiple sightings of her around the Northeast.

Police were trying to determine whether Brair left home voluntarily, Costello said.

Dawkins did not confirm broadcast media reports that the victim may have been a witness in an ongoing criminal prosecution involving a robbery. ••

—William Kenny

a close the strange saga which, according to witnesses, began when Wayne Derkotch, 41, of the 1100 block of E. Will St., and the coach of the Northeast Optimists team argued over playing time for Derkotch's young son.

Jermaine Wilson was coaching the 6- and 7-year-old boys in an Oct. 22 game against the Oxford Circle Raiders at Burholme Park.

Derkotch, who was licensed to carry a concealed gun, does not dispute that he pointed the weapon at Wilson, but he claims he acted in self-defense as Wilson physically beat him.

Defense attorney Brian Quinn, citing a defense witness' account, said that during the verbal argument, Wilson left the sideline and led Derkotch toward a team clubhouse, where the dispute became physical.

"Derkotch was walking behind Jermaine Wilson, who was pointing to an area behind the clubhouse, then (Wilson) turned around and punched (Derkotch) four or five times in the face," Quinn said.

Derkotch then fell to the ground with Wilson over him and, fearing further fistcuffs, brandished a .357-caliber revolver, Quinn added.

When Wilson backed off, Derkotch got up, went to his car and put the gun inside a holster and put the holster and gun inside the vehicle, Quinn said.

Police arrived a short time later. Wilson was not arrested or charged with any crime.

Derkotch lost a tooth and had an eye swollen shut in the fight, according to Quinn.

Assistant District Attorney Randy Hsia argued during the waiver trial that Derkotch used unnecessary force and that his actions were not in self-defense because he started the dispute in the first place.

Prosecution witnesses testified that Derkotch was the aggressor.

Quinn said after the trial, that his client was disturbed by the way the incident has been portrayed in the news media, whose accounts generally reflected the prosecutor's version of events.

"What was reported was one side of a story," Quinn said.

In addition to clearing Derkotch of simple assault, Washington also acquitted him of reckless endangerment and possessing an instrument of crime.

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Derkotch was not the only person absolved of criminal charges related to the incident.

Police arrested game referee Shawn Henwood at the scene after they allegedly saw him hit Paul Derkotch, brother of Wayne.

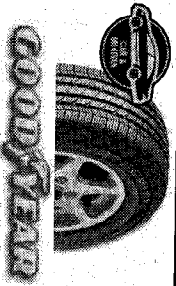
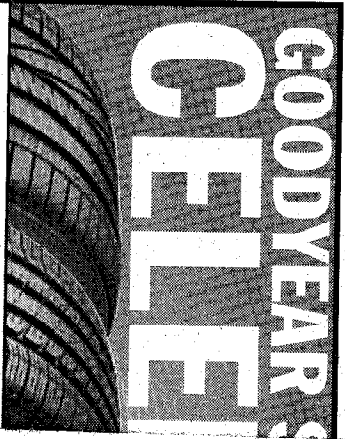
Henwood later claimed he was trying to record the license plate information for Wayne Derkotch's car, in case the gunman decided to leave the scene, when Paul Derkotch intervened.

The district attorney's office dropped the charges against Henwood last December on the same day as Wayne Derkotch's preliminary hearing.

A prosecutor agreed that Henwood was only trying to help police before they made it to the scene.

Others described Henwood as a hero for ushering players from both teams to a far end of the field and instructing them to crouch for cover when Derkotch produced the gun. ••

Reporter William Kenny can be reached at 215-354-3031 or wkenny@phillynews.com



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