

Ex-guard acquitted in school-sex trial

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MIDDLESEX COUNTY: A former security officer at New Brunswick High School who was accused of sexually assaulting a 16-year-old female student there was acquitted of all counts by a Superior Court Jury yesterday.

The jury acquitted Henry Solares, 31, a former Middlesex County correction officer, of second-degree sexual assault, fourth-degree sexual contact, and second-degree official misconduct.

"I'm elated at the verdict," said South Orange attorney Timothy Smith, who represented Solares.

"I'm elated on a professional

level, as an attorney because it is refreshing to see the system work in acquitting an innocent man. I'm also elated on a personal level because Henry Solares is a decent human being and was unjustly charged."

The jury returned the verdict at 5:30 p.m. after deliberating for about 45 minutes.

As the trial wound down in Superior Court, New Brunswick, earlier yesterday, Smith said in his closing statement, "It is a tragedy that this man has even been charged," and accused the alleged victim of making up the story to protect another security guard with whom she had a relationship.

"There is not one piece of supporting evidence that this took place," Smith said.

On the other hand, Assistant Prosecutor Lori Kaniper said Solares had "groomed" the girl "and then compromised her."

"He was somebody you are supposed to go to for help — for protection," she said. "He made a mockery out of his position."

The girl had said that Solares arranged to meet her in front of her locker at 2:30 p.m., 15 minutes after classes were dismissed.

She said he had been friendly and affectionate with her for

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several weeks and took her to a small office in the boiler room where he kissed her, fondled her and then had sexual intercourse with her.

She said the two left the building about 3 p.m. and went their separate ways.

Smith called Richard Whiteford, assistant superintendent at the detention center, as a witness. Whiteford testified

that records show Solares arrived at work that day between 3 p.m. and 3:08 p.m. and worked the 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. shift.

Kaniper presented the testimony of two of the alleged victim's cousins, who testified that the girl told them during a July 4 fireworks display in Milltown how a man named "Henry" had sexual intercourse with her in the school boiler room about a month earlier.