

# Alleged Bengals rape victim may be unable to sue



SEATTLE (AP) — A woman who says she was gang-raped by Cincinnati Bengals players conceded Tuesday that she did not read the release document she signed for \$30,000, which may bar her from suing over the alleged assault.

"I didn't think I needed to," the woman, identified in court records as Victoria C., said Tuesday under cross-examination by team lawyer Robert Stachler of Cincinnati. "You didn't look at the title?" Stachler said.

Victoria C. reiterated that she believes the document was titled "Agreement." In fact, it is titled "Release of All Claims."

Victoria C. said she simply glanced through the document and "looked at whatever caught my eye," she said.

An exasperated Stachler asked whether she had glanced at the second paragraph, or the third clause.

"It doesn't look familiar," the plaintiff said, perusing the document.

"I just saw '\$30,000,' and I knew what it was about," she offered.

Victoria C. said she also did not read the cover letter from Cincinnati attorney James Perry, who prepared the release she signed Oct. 5, 1991 — about a year after the alleged assault at a Seattle-area hotel.

"I just glanced through it. I didn't read it. ... I already knew what to do" from telephone conversations with Perry, the plaintiff said.

Victoria C. said she trusted Perry because he was an attorney and "seemed like a nice man."

Stachler did not complete his cross-examination Tuesday, the seventh day of the trial and the plaintiff's third day on the stand. He will wrap up his questions Monday, when the trial resumes. U.S. District Judge Walter McGovern had a prior commitment. Attorneys Peter Byrnes and

**'I just saw '\$30,000,' and I knew what it was about.'**

— Victoria C.,  
alleged rape victim

Spencer Hall, each representing a group of players, then will question the plaintiff.

Victoria C. is asking jurors to throw out the release document so she can proceed with her lawsuit against the team and 19 current and former players — 12 accused of raping her and seven of standing by while it happened.

Her lawyers contend she did not have legal counsel at the time and signed under duress, and that the document provides inadequate compensation.

Defense lawyers contend the release is a binding contract.

"Did the word 'forfeit' jump out at you?" Stachler asked Tuesday, going over the document with her.

"Yes, I saw that word," Victoria C. said.

Stachler asked if she understood that the document said she would have to give back the \$30,000 if she publicized terms of the agreement.

Victoria C. said Perry had told her "the players could sue me if I went public" with her allegations, but that she did not recall the provision Stachler was citing.

Stachler suggested that while she had questioned last May whether the document she signed was, in fact, a release, "you now know it was."

"I'm not sure whether I do or not," Victoria C. said.

"Absolutely absurd," is how Byrnes characterized her testimony Tuesday. Commenting after the morning session, he noted the word "release" is used twice in the paragraph an inch or so above her signature.

# Youth slams truck into Helix church

HELIX (AP) — A nine-year-old boy taking a joy ride in a stolen pickup truck slammed into the side of the Helix Community Baptist Church on Sunday, narrowly missing the 90-year-old building's stained glass windows.

There were no injuries among the 30 members of the congregation, but one woman was shaken up when the pew in which she was sitting was shoved about a foot by the impact, said the Rev. Christine Prescott.

"No one was hurt, and we attribute that to the Lord's protection," Prescott said.

Some congregation members believed it was a bomb, and others thought it was a crash outside in the street, she said.

"We all went out, and I don't think anyone expected to see a truck against the building," Prescott said.

The pickup crashed into a support post, which kept it from coming right through the wall, she said.

"If it hadn't hit that, it would have come through the wall and hit who knows how many people," Prescott said.

The boy was gone when parishioners reached the truck, but his younger brother apparently told the boy's parents, who brought him back to the church. There, he confessed to Umatilla County Sheriff's Deputy Glen Diehl.

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