

TEENS PLEAD GUILTY IN SEXUAL ASSAULT - ADULT CONVICTIONS TO MEAN CONFINEMENT

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Thursday, December 6, 2001

Author: JACK KRESNAK FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Teens plead guilty in sexual assault

Ending months of denial, two teenagers pleaded guilty as adults Wednesday in the sexual assault of a 12-year-old girl at Hutchins Middle School in Detroit.

Audi Dawson, 15, accepted a deal offered by the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office and pleaded guilty to third-degree criminal sexual conduct. He admitted assaulting the girl in a secluded area of the school on May 1.

The agreement means that **Dawson** would expect to be sentenced to 3-15 years in prison. But after he completes parole and is released, the charge can be reduced to a misdemeanor, said his lawyer, Todd Russell Perkins.

Assistant Prosecutor Douglas Baker said his office would not object to the reduction, provided that **Dawson** commits no other crimes in or out of prison.

A codefendant, Dominique Brown, also 15, pleaded guilty earlier Wednesday to fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct, a misdemeanor, in an agreement that gives her an adult conviction but a sentence tailored to her age.

Under the agreement, Brown will become a ward of the state but will be under the supervision of the Wayne County Department of Community Justice. She will be confined for one year at the Vista Maria residential treatment program for troubled girls in Dearborn Heights and later will be enrolled in other rehabilitation programs.

Both will be sentenced Jan. 16 by Wayne County Circuit Judge Patricia Fresard.

Fresard, who will retain control of Brown for the next three years, warned the girl that if she fails to cooperate with the rehabilitation programs, she may be locked up under harsher terms.

Brown and **Dawson** also must register as sex offenders.

Two other youths -- a 13-year-old girl and 14-year-old boy -- have pleaded guilty to reduced charges as juveniles in the case and face sentencing to similar rehabilitation programs, although they may not be confined.

Dawson and Brown had been charged with first-degree criminal sexual conduct involving a child under age 13, which carries a maximum penalty of life in prison upon conviction.

The 12-year-old girl told police that she was lured out of class by the two younger teens and tricked into going to an abandoned fourth-floor area of the school, located on Woodrow Wilson Street. There, she said, she was grabbed by **Dawson** and carried over a catwalk to an attic area.

While Brown and the other girl held her, she said, **Dawson** sexually assaulted her.

Brown had said she was present but denied forcing the girl in any way.

But Wednesday, she told Fresard a different story.

"I held" the girl "down while **Audi** had sex with her," Brown said quietly. Asked by the judge if she was aware the girl was under age 13, Brown said yes. Sex with a child under 13 is treated as a more serious offense.

Brown heaved a sigh after it was over, the beads in her carefully braided hair clicking quietly.

Dawson said little except that he had sex with the girl. His mother wept audibly in the back row of the courtroom as he admitted his guilt.

After the pleas, the father of the victim said he was satisfied that justice was being served and that the convicted youths would get counseling and other treatment.

"We want to try to get them some help," the father said. "We relied on the justice system, and it has not let us down so far."

Contact JACK KRESNAK at 313-223-4544 or kresnak@freepress.com.

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 5B

Index Terms: SEXUAL ASSUALT ; CRIME ; DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS ; HUTCHINS MIDDLE ; SCHOOL ; AUDI DAWSON; DOMINIQUE BROWN ; PLEA

Record Number: 0112060301

Copyright (c) 2001 Detroit Free Press