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City man, 34, acquitted of alleged sexual assault

By Michelle Tuccitto
Register Staff

NEW HAVEN — A city man who was incarcerated since late 2003 on charges that he raped a female acquaintance was acquitted Thursday.

Lawrence Harris, 34, was on trial this week on charges of first-degree sexual assault and first-degree unlawful restraint.

A jury acquitted Harris after about two hours of deliberations.

"He put his head down and started crying (when the verdict was announced),"

said his attorney, Tara Knight of New Haven. "I'm very relieved. I was concerned the jury would believe (the complainant). Her story was not credible."

Senior Assistant State's Attorney Gary Nicholson, who prosecuted the case, could not be reached for comment Thursday.

The woman claimed Harris sexually assaulted her Nov. 14, 2003, in her Batter Terrace apartment after they watched television together.

She alleged that she fell asleep and awoke to discover Harris sexually assaulting her.

"The defense was one of consent and implausibility of an attack the way the woman described it," Knight said. "She had no injuries and no marks. There were parts missing to her story."

Knight acknowledged that her client has a criminal record, but said it didn't include any history of violence.

Harris had been held in lieu of bail and had been under a suicide watch, court documents show.

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