

MiamiHerald.com 

Posted on Thu, Mar. 13, 2008

Broward jury clears teacher in beating case

BY TODD WRIGHT

A Broward substitute teacher accused of beating up a student was found innocent earlier this week, thanks to a cellphone video which shows that the student actually attacked him.

The teacher could now pursue a civil lawsuit against the Broward County School Board.

Joseph Wynn Brazer, 35, acted in self-defense when students at Whiddon-Rogers Education Center in Fort Lauderdale pelted him with hard-covered books last year, his attorney told jurors, who took less than 15 minutes to return the not-guilty verdict.

On Oct. 17, Brazer was teaching a reading class at Whiddon-Rogers, when Sheldon Davis cut the lights off in the classroom in the middle of the lesson.

As Brazer went to flip the switch back on, a flurry of books flew at his head and back. Brazer told jurors he saw the third book being thrown by Davis, whom he tackled before another projectile could be tossed at him.

Davis, 18, chipped two of his teeth.

Other students joined the fracas, restraining Brazer while Davis got in one final blow -- a hard right cross to the face of Brazer, caught on a student's cellphone camera.

"The cellphone video shows the real story," said Robyn Blake, Brazer's attorney. Davis was suspended for a few days.

Brazer was arrested for felony battery and found innocent, but still carries a scarlet letter, Blake said.

Brazer hasn't been able to find steady work since news of the fight with Davis made local headlines. He has unsuccessfully tried to find work through temp agencies, but most times he is released after a background check.

He recently found work overseas and plans to move in April, Blake said. Brazer has not decided whether to seek financial damages from the School Board.

"He has had a hard time finding a decent job because of this case. Because of this incident, he got out of teaching," Blake said. "He is upset at the way he was treated by the administration. He won't teach again in Broward."

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