

Man convicted of assaulting Yankee pitcher Wells For Kwame Brown, a great leap forward

by Karen Freifeld and Graham Rayman Newsday

A jury convicted a man Thursday night of assaulting David Wells in a Manhattan diner, despite testimony that the Yankees pitcher was drunk and made the first physical contact in the confrontation.

Rocco Graziosa, 27, a bartender, faces up to 1 year in jail for knocking out two of Wells' teeth with one punch in the Sept. 7 altercation at Gracie's Diner on the Upper East Side. Sentencing before Criminal Court Judge Robert Stolz is scheduled for Jan. 15.

Jurors, who deliberated less than three hours, said Graziosa had other options even after Wells, 39, placed a hand on his shoulder during a verbal exchange in the diner. Both men acknowledged that they had been drinking before the encounter shortly before 6 a.m. that day.

"Clearly, not the only option was to hit him in the face," said juror Paul Jacobsen, 33, a salesman. "I have a hard time understanding, does that warrant a punch to the face?"

Gaetano D'Angelo, Graziosa's uncle, reacted with shock at the verdict. "You call that justice? I don't," he said.

Jurors did not buy the defense's contention that Graziosa, who is 5-foot-6 and 140 pounds, was intimidated by Wells, who is 6-foot-4, 250

pounds.

"We agree with the defense he put his hand on his shoulder, but we didn't feel there was enough evidence he was so threatened," said Jacobsen, who said after the verdict he is a Yankees fan. "We just don't feel a punch to the face was warranted. ... I would have said, 'Take your hand off me. I don't want any trouble, pal.'"

Juror Sonia Dunfield suggested that Wells' apparent intoxication, about which two police officers testified, made him less threatening. "He was also drunk, so he wasn't overpowering," she said.

Wells was not present for the verdict. Mel Sachs, who represents Wells and the Yankees, said, "He acted as a true Yankee. Justice was served in the courtroom."

The jury found Graziosa innocent of harassment and a weapons possession charge. He had been accused of waving a butter knife at the pitcher after knocking him down.

Wells testified earlier this week that Graziosa said, "Why don't you order a - - - cheeseburger, you fat - - - ?" after the pitcher ordered an egg-white omelet and waffles. Graziosa went on to insult Wells and his mother, Wells said.

Graziosa's attorney, Harry Mazurek, told jurors that Wells was "stinking drunk." He asserted Wells grabbed Graziosa first, and the smaller man reacted in self-defense.

by Rachel Nichols The Washington Post

It was a nice little curve of a story line: Kid comes to team, gets blasted, learns the error of his ways and trades confusion and fast food for discipline and a vegetable plate. By the next season, kid has become tougher, coach has become looser and everyone's happier.

Except the real world isn't that tidy. In Kwame Brown's case, the learning curve's been a learning jumble, with downs for every up and ups for every down.

"Sometimes it works, sometimes I'm still learning," says Brown. His rookie year with the Washington Wizards was a muddled swamp of disappointing play and detrimental habits, of loud bursts of coaching and quiet moments of doubt. Now in his second season, the terrain of his experience is much more firm but no more level.

"I knew there were going to be peaks and valleys," says Coach Doug Collins, and although he's being extra careful this year not to be too hard on Brown, he makes it clear that along with Brown's increased production, he wouldn't mind more consistency. "There just has to be some nice spot in between where we can say, 'This is what we know he can bring us each night.' Right now we don't have that."

What they have is a vastly improved player with steady good intentions and jagged execution, a player of outrageous talent who can play lights-out basketball for the first two games of the season and then sag for the next six, who can record two points and three rebounds in one game and then 15 points and 11 rebounds in the next, as Brown did last week against Utah and Miami, respectively.

They have a player who desperately wants to be independent but knows he still needs instruction, who's 20 years old and trying to learn on the job what most of the others around him learned in college.

"A lot of guys played big minutes their first year, but I didn't," Brown says, "and I think the coaches have to be patient with me and I have to be patient with myself, learning how to play big minutes one night and then come back the next night and perform. It's a lot."

Last year, much was made of Brown's off-court habits. During the preseason, a New York Times columnist wrote about Brown being mystified by not being able to get French dressing in a fancy French restaurant, and so for the rest of the season, Brown had to answer questions about French dressing everywhere he went. Even food preferences that didn't become public knowledge until later became an issue within the Wizards' organiza-

tion. Brown didn't know how to cook, so for a while he was existing on Popeye's and pizza and whatever junk food ended up in his cupboards.

By the end of the season, there were a few healthy dishes he became good at making, and a few more he became good at ordering. But the real change in his home life didn't come until the summer, when Brown reunited with a high school girlfriend, Jocelyn Vaughn. The two are now living together in Brown's house in Virginia.

"She's someone who I can relate to, she knows me inside out," says Brown. "When I come home quiet, she knows when and how to talk to me, so that's a big deal."

Brown's still learning how to work out not just for strength but endurance. Last week, when veteran teammate Charles Oakley was asked whether Brown was tough enough for the NBA yet, Oakley answered "no," a sentiment that seemed to be backed up by Collins a day later, when he substituted Oakley for Brown to defend Utah's Karl Malone.

"We were on our heels--they were playing volleyball on the backboards," Collins said after the game. "I was looking down there going, who do I put in to play against Karl Malone that will at least put their body on him and make it tough for him?"

Said Oakley: "I've told Kwame, when you're playing against the best, it's going to be a task. I don't think his mind yet is into diving and getting onto the floor, going after the loose balls. He started the season out like Superman, and he doesn't have to have that energy every night, but he does have to have energy."

Brown knows this, and the fact that he's even able to put it to use some of the time marks a significant change from last season, when he struggled to get just 15 minutes a game, averaged just 4.5 points and 3.5 rebounds and fell into the decimal points in blocks (.5) and steals (.3). But sometimes even now, he has trouble getting his internal engine started, and even when he does, he often needs help figuring out which way he should direct the steering. Then there's the variant of how different teams play him.

"At the beginning of the season, teams basically thought I was going to be the same kind of guy from last year, so they were kind of leaving me alone," says Brown.

"Before, they were like, oh, let him catch it, he's going to turn the ball over anyway. Now, they're saying we've got to guard this guy in the post, so they're fronting me a lot more."

The days that Brown can make it all work, the days where last season's struggles seem a thousand miles behind him, feel good in a way Brown didn't even know was possible. "My whole goal last year was to be on the floor during the fourth quarter, because that's when you know the coaches trust you and respect you enough to make the play happen, and I've gotten to do that."



Behrend Basketball Info.

Women's Basketball Roster 2002-2003

Table with 6 columns: No., Name, Position, Height, Year, Hometown/High School. Lists 20 players including Danielle Bemis, Bambi Lewis, Nicole Pacinelli, etc.

Head Coach: Roz Fornari
Assistant Coaches: Shannon Keller, Becky Reed & Amy Stranahan
Team Manager: Bridgette Ramdhanie

Women's home schedule

Table with 3 columns: Date, Opponent, Time. Lists home games from November 22 to February 2.

Men's home schedule

Table with 3 columns: Date, Opponent, Time. Lists home games from November 22 to Feb. 28-Mar. 1.

2002-03 Men's Basketball Roster

Table with 6 columns: No., Name, Height, Position, Year, Hometown/High School. Lists 20 players including Joe Lucas, Tom Lulich, Justin Jennings, etc.

Head Coach: Dave Niland
Assistant Coaches: Mark Murphy, Joe Spinelli & Pat Swick
Team Manager: Dan Vidal

Fans are definitely unbalanced in rivalries

by Lisa Dillman Los Angeles Times

College football fans don't need an extra cup of coffee to keep alert during rivalry week.

They are already closely monitoring television programs for hints of bias, counting the inches in newspapers, wondering how school X managed to get 10 more inches of copy on Wednesday than school Z.

It can even be difficult to get universities to agree on a team of television announcers. Which is why the "Civil War"--Oregon vs. Oregon State--almost didn't get on TV this year, according to the Portland Oregonian.

Veteran announcer Barry Tompkins, who wound up being acceptable to both sides, says there is a fail-safe way of knowing whether he has successfully straddled the line during a "Civil War" broadcast.

"I always know I'm safe when I get hate mail from both sides, which I'm sure will happen this game," he told the Oregonian's Rachel Bachman.

94 and counting: Someone was bound to puncture the good vibe surrounding Dusty Baker's introduction as the new Cubs' manager at recent news gathering in Chicago.

Not surprisingly, the Cubs' 94-year World Series drought came up. Baker, looking startled, said: "I'm finding out all these numbers when I got here."

Wrote Chicago Sun-Times columnist Ron Rapoport: "Somebody had to break the bad news to him at some point, I guess, and Baker did his best to turn things around by saying, 'You can't bring the past with you to the present.'"

Thumbs down: There is no such thing as "only" an exhibition for the Kentucky men's basketball team, as Pat Forde of the Louisville Courier-Journal noted after Nike Elite defeated Kentucky on Monday.

The fans registered their disapproval, booing and hitting the radio call-in shows.

"Memo to Nike kingpin Phil Knight: Don't kill the golden goose, dude," Forde wrote. "You're jeopardizing merchandise sales when this team of vagabonds beats your flagship programs like UK and North Carolina."

"Not a loss that counts, of course, though you'd have a hard time convincing UK fans of that. It's only mid-November, and toxicity already is thick around this basketball program."