

## Front Range mechanic cleared in Vail rape case

### Man found not guilty of sexually assaulting teenager in Vail

By Matt Zalaznick Daily Staff Writer May 25, 2002

A Front Range mechanic was found not guilty Thursday of sexually assaulting a then 14-year-old girl in a Vail condo early on New Year's Day, 2001.

Daniel Stoops, 30, of Louisville, was also acquitted by an Eagle County jury of contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

"This has been a living nightmare for Dan Stoops and we're thankful to the jury and the American jury system for exonerating him," said Dan Recht, Stoops' lawyer. "Imagine 18 months of being charged with rape."

The jury returned its verdict at 8 p.m. Thursday after a four-day trial.

"It's eerie and weird waiting until 8 p.m. The courthouse is empty and you're pacing back and forth," Recht said. "It's hard."

Deputy District Attorney John Clune said sexual assault cases where a child is the victim can often be hard to prove.

"This was a very difficult case for everyone involved," Clune said. "We fully understand the jury's verdict given the limited evidence they had to work with. Unfortunately, this is all too often the nature of child sexual assault cases."

Stoops was arrested by Vail police Jan. 25, 2001, after an investigation that lasted nearly a month. The girl is from the Denver-area.

Stoops was acquainted with one of the members of the girl's family and had joined the family New Year's Eve for dinner and drinks in Vail Village, Vail police said.

After dinner, the family split up and the girl went out with Stoops and other friends, Vail police said.

Stoops and the girl were then dropped at her family's condo, Vail police said.

The girl, who may have been drunk, had accused Stoops of sexually assaulting her sometime between 1 a.m. and 4 a.m. while the rest of her family slept.

Through the District Attorney's Office lost the case, Clune did not criticize the jury's decision.

"As long as the people have had a fair opportunity to present their case and the jury deliberates and returns a unanimous verdict, our criminal justice system has worked," Clune said. "We had that opportunity in this case and thus appreciate and respect the decision"

If you are in need of an experienced business litigator or criminal defense attorney, please call Recht & Kornfeld today.

Call Us At  
303.573.1900  
Fax: 303.446.9400  
1600 Stout Street, Suite 1000  
Denver, CO 80202