

Four West Midlands police officers walk free from court

By Larry Fedja
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Four police officers were cleared of charges relating to the death of Mikey Powell whilst in police custody in September 2003.

The officers, Lee Howard, Andrew Edwards, Luke Gill and David Williams were all cleared of charges brought by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) which alledged that they neglected to take reasonable steps to respond to Mikey's deteriorating condition on arriving at Thornhill Road police station.

Six other officers will face the remainder of the trial set to last for several more weeks. The trial commenced on 8th May 2006. The officers remaining are Acting Sgt Christopher Wilson, pc Timothy Lewis, pc David Hadley, Insp Anthony Guest, pc Nigel Hackett and pc Steven Hollyman.

Lewis and Hadley face charges of dangerous driving, and assault on Mikey Powell and a friend, Ernest Walters. Hackett is charged with participating in the excessive restraint outside the family home, Guest is charged with neglecting to prevent restraint and Wilson is charged both with participating in, and failing to prevent the excessive restraint of Mikey.

Charges against all officers, including those still on trial, which relate to neglecting to take steps to respond to Mikey's deteriorating condition whilst being transported to the police station, neglecting to take him to a hospital and neglecting to respond to his deteriorating condition on arrival at the police station were dropped at the direction of the judge, Sir Douglas Brown.

The dropping of these charges stemmed from the examination of video and audio footage during the trial. The judge directed the jury to acquit the men, telling them, "I will say very little about that except that it's almost entirely based on consideration of the audio tape and the various interpretations of it, "and I have ruled that the tape is in such a condition and the interpretations put in the transcript are so lacking in reliability, that you will not be troubled with them and they will be taken from you."

The remaining officers have all pleaded not guilty to the charges brought against them, and the trial will continue.