Rick Lee rape charges dropped

By Chris Thomson
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Rick Lee, the WA junior cycling coach and former national youth coach charged with raping a girl in the US state of Pennsylvania, has had all charges against him dropped, according to a cycling associate.

"As we speak, he's being released from jail now," Amanda O'Connor said yesterday morning.

"The family heard from Rick's brother about 20 minutes ago and he's currently on his way to collect Rick."

Ms O'Connor is a keen cyclist who was formerly coached by Lee. She is the spokesperson for the Midland Cycle Club, of which he is a member.

Lee, 51, had faced a suite of rape charges in Lehigh Township, Pennsylvania, after turning himself into police there on July 16.

Ms O'Connor said Lee had been released at 10.20am Perth time, after a delay had frustrated his rumoured release at 6am.

"Unless there is a further delay, he should be a free man about now-ish," Ms O'Connor said.

"The District Attorney has dropped all charges and there will be no conviction recorded against his name whatsoever.

Lee had been charged with rape, statutory rape, burglary, trespass, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, sexual assault, aggravated indecent assault, indecent assault and indecent exposure. The charges carried penalties of up to 20 years jail.

Ms O'Connor said Lee had initially agreed to plea to a lesser charge offered to him by District Attorney John Morganelli.

But she said a review of outstanding forensic evidence by Mr Morganelli’s office led the DA to drop all charges.
For the past four months, Lee had been languishing on remand in Northampton County Prison, after bail of $US125,000 was set.

"We've been kept a little bit in the dark with what has happened with his legal team," Ms O'Connor said.

"But Rick's family is rapt at the result and that he'll soon be on his way home."

At the time of his arrest, Lee was in Pennsylvania coaching a visiting 10-strong Australian junior cycling team, including two members from Western Australia.

The 15-year-old girl at the centre of the allegations claimed Lee wore a condom while raping her.

An affidavit, signed by investigation leader Detective Robert Hawke, said the girl told police Lee confronted her in her family house after she collected a newspaper from the front yard.

The girl had alleged Lee forced her upstairs, ripped her clothes off, pinned her down and raped her.

Lee coached the Australian Youth Olympic team in 2005 and was assistant manager of the Australian Youth Olympic team in 2003.
His wife Debbie has been contacted for comment.

- With 6PR Morning Program

Arrested: West Australian cycling coach Rick Lee.