

Max Clifford cleared of indecent assault

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Former celebrity publicist Max Clifford has been cleared of indecently assaulting a 17-year-old girl by a jury at Southwark Crown Court.

Clifford, 73, was accused of indecently assaulting the girl between October 1981 and May 1982 at his Mayfair offices in London.

He always denied the allegation.

Clifford, of Hersham, Surrey, is serving an eight-year jail sentence after being convicted in May 2014 of a string of indecent assaults.

Some of the biggest names in show business, including pop mogul Simon Cowell, late reality TV star Jade Goody and boxer Muhammad Ali, were represented by Clifford during his career.

'Position of power'

The jury took five hours and 50 minutes to find him not guilty.

Wearing a blue suit and open-neck white shirt, Clifford smiled briefly and winked in the direction of his daughter in the public gallery, upon hearing the decision.

He also raised his hand in a gesture of thanks to his counsel, before being led back into custody to continue his prison sentence.

During the trial prosecutors accused Clifford of trying to use his "position of power" to "humiliate" the alleged victim and force her to perform a sex act.

But Clifford denied the incident ever happened.

Giving evidence in his defence, Clifford said his previous convictions, which he continued to deny, had made him "an easy target".

"One of the things I have learned is you're guilty until you're proven innocent when sexual offences are involved," he told the court.

He also revealed he had employed private investigators for this trial to prove his innocence, who were "all ex-Met Police".

In May 2014, Clifford was given an eight-year prison sentence after being convicted of a number of charges under Operation Yewtree - the Met Police investigation set up in the wake of the Jimmy Savile scandal.

Clifford is now expected to return to HMP Littlehey in East Anglia, where he told the jury during his trial he had been playing tennis and softball and writing a book.

He was held in Wandsworth Prison in south London while the trial was ongoing.