BA steward says he was fired over false rape claim

By Chris Gray
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Julian Henry was arrested but the rape charges were later dropped and in January 1999 he was given a six-month suspended jail sentence and a $1,000 fine after pleading "no contest" to a charge of assault and battery.

Mr Henry and the stewardess had joined the captain and another crew member for the drinking session in Washington, the night before they were due to fly to Britain. Mr Henry is claiming unfair dismissal against British Airways. The case has again focused attention on allegations of a drinking culture among BA flight crews, after unrelated incidents were exposed by the Channel 4 Dispatches programme.

The company is introducing compulsory drink and drug tests and has suspended 14 staff after one pilot was found to have reported for work having allegedly drunk the equivalent of 10 pints of beer and having had just three hours' sleep.

Yesterday Mr Henry, 49, of West Chiltington, West Sussex, claimed he had been unfairly dismissed by BA after the rape charges against him were dropped in January last year. He had worked for British Airways for 32 years before the incident at the McLean Hilton Hotel, Washington, in April 1998.
The employment tribunal at Croydon, south London, was told how Mr Henry, the stewardess, the captain and another crew member met at the hospitality suite of the hotel and downed free drinks until it closed.

They had more champagne in Mr Henry's room before the others left. The stewardess later returned to his room.

A summary of the US court judgment, read to the tribunal, said: "Sometime later the victim awoke in Henry's bed. She remembers being exhausted and feeling the effects of the alcohol.

"He was next to her and he touched her without permission and she became very upset. The cabin services director was called and the defendant denied touching her apart from consensual touching and kissing."

A British Airways internal inquiry set up to look at the criminal charges discovered quarter bottles of champagne from the aircraft in Mr Henry's room. Crew members were investigated over the theft.

Mr Henry, a husband with two children, also faced an allegation of breaching company policy by giving an interview to Carlton Television. He was sacked in August 1999.

Caroline Gregory, BA general manager of personnel services, told the tribunal the airline had given full support to Mr Henry when he was arrested, and had also arranged a loan to cover his legal costs.

The case, which is expected to last six days, continues.

https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/ba-steward-says-he-was-fired-over-false-rape-claim-634492.html