

Isaac Williams Found Innocent

JUN 19 '82 SAT

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A magistrates jury found state NAACP Field Director Isaac Williams and five others innocent of gambling charges Friday in a Columbia courtroom.

The six jurors, who deliberated only 30 minutes after the 6½-hour trial, apparently believed defense attorneys who contended that the prosecution did not prove that the defendants were gambling.

Williams said after the trial that the verdict "makes me even more invigorated to keep on doing what I'm doing. Black leadership should always be aware that we will always be under scrutiny.

"I'm going to be an open target for many things, and you have to realize that if you accept the position of leadership you have to take the barbs," Williams told reporters.

Defense attorney Franchot Brown had told the jury that the defendants "were not playing (cards) for money.

They were not gambling."

A parade of prosecution witnesses, all investigating officers, had testified that they saw the six men sitting around a table in the kitchen of Willie Fleming's house playing cards.

Richland Sheriff's officer Leon Lott, who was in charge of the investigation, said several of the defendants tried to flee when he knocked on the door and announced they were police officers.

(See JURY, 5-B, Col. 3)

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One officer kicked down a side door to the house and several of them rushed in with their pistols drawn. They quickly arrested the men, one of whom got as far as the front yard before he was stopped.

Marijuana was found in the house and several men had wads of cash stuffed in their pockets. Two-hundred dollars was lying on the kitchen table and floor, Lott said.

Williams had no money on him at the time of his arrest and Lott said he presumed that the \$200 found on the table belonged to Williams.

In his closing argument to the jury, Brown painted a lurid picture of police officers "sneaking around in the dark of night, organizing on Frontage Road and looking like a bunch of hippies."

Brown explained that the men ran away when the police broke down the door because they were frightened.

"All those white faces in the middle of a solid black neighborhood with long hair and beards bursting in with

pistols drawn." Brown said. "You could give a man a heart attack with something like that."

Co-counsel Jack Swirling told the jurors, "If you had six white fellows sitting in a house and seven black men came busting in the house with their guns drawn, I submit those white fellows would run in every direction."

Attorney William Able, acting as a special prosecutor, said, "It would be an insult to the court to say that six people with cards in their hands and money on the table weren't gambling."

The trial came more than three months after the men were arrested at a private home in the Greenview subdivision north of Columbia.

On trial along with Williams were Thomas Martin, Willie F. Pratt, Theodore Dilligard, Robert Archie and Jimmie S. Jones.

Lawyers for Williams and the others tried unsuccessfully in the trial to get Magistrate Samuel Peay to rule that the search warrants used by law enforcement officials the night of the arrests were improper.

Peay also denied a motion by Swirling to dismiss the charges before they went to the all-black jury. Swirling argued that the prosecution failed to prove that anyone was gambling or that the house was used for gambling purposes.

The attorneys noted that the search warrant was based on a tip that drugs would be found at a house on Cindy Drive. The defendants were originally charged with possession of marijuana.

The drug charges were dropped against the six defendants when the owner of the house, Willie Fleming, allegedly claimed that the marijuana belonged to him. Fleming is to be tried separately in General Sessions Court on the drug charges and charges of operating a gambling house.

Brown explained why the cash was found on the defendants. "They had a right to have money in their pockets. They work every day. Don't tell me where I can have my money. You can have it in your pocket — in your hat.

"I can put money in my underwear," Brown said to the jury.