

Enterprise man found not guilty of sexual torture, rape of girl

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A Dale County jury found an Enterprise man not guilty Thursday of sexual torture and rape of a 6-year-old Dothan girl.

Dale County District Attorney Kirke Adams said a jury returned the not guilty verdict just before lunch Thursday, acquitting Joe Allen McLendon, 30, of all four charges he faced. Dale County Sheriff's investigators arrested McLendon on July 17, 2008, and charged him with first-degree rape, first-degree sodomy, felony sexual torture, and sex abuse of a child less than the age of 12.

The first three charges are all class A felony crimes, which carry a possible sentence of 10 to 99 years or life in prison. The sex abuse charge is a class B felony and carries a possible two-to-20-year prison sentence.

The charges against McLendon were brought after he was accused of sexually assaulting the girl on March 1, 2007 at a residence

in Midland City.

"I'm very disappointed, but I understand that juries have a tough job," Adams said.

David Robinson, who represented McLendon with Patrick Jones, said the defense contended the child made the sexual assaults up with prompting from her mother. He said there was apparent medical evidence, but the defense claimed it showed there was almost no evidence of an injury and that it wasn't even visible to the naked eye.

The defense did not contend someone else sexually assaulted the girl, but that it didn't happen at all.

The girl's mother, who is from Dothan, said there was medical evidence showing her daughter was sexually assaulted.

"I want the community to know justice was not served for my little girl," said the girl's mother, who the *Dothan Eagle* did not identify to protect the girl's identity. "She had the courage to go up on the stand and face 13 jury members."

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