

Ex-Conroe ISD police sergeant found guilty of improper relationship with student

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A Montgomery County jury convicted a former Conroe ISD police sergeant Friday afternoon of having an improper relationship with a male student over six-month span in 2012 and 2013.

Christopher Lee Sutton, 38, awaits sentencing for having sex with a Caney Creek High School senior while working as a sergeant at The Woodlands High School, a position he later resigned from after pressure from the student's boyfriend at the time.

Sutton was found guilty on all five counts of the second-degree felony charges, each of which carries a penalty range between two and 20 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$10,000.

The jury returned the guilty verdict about 1:30 p.m., and still was considering a punishment about 4 p.m.

Court documents show that the first sexual encounter was just two days after Sutton contacted the student on social media, when the student contacted Sutton for a ride home from a church function in The Woodlands because his original carpooling option fell through.

The arrest warrant affidavit states that during the ride home, they discussed "hooking up," and eventually Sutton drove to a wooded park off Texas 242, where the two walked into the woods to have both oral and anal sex.

There were at least five sexual encounters from August 2012 to February 2013.

The student's mother joined the CISD Police Department with Sutton around 2000 and worked at Moorhead Junior High School at the time of the relationship.

Sutton had been a close family friend for most of the student's upbringing, but the sexual relationship was prompted by Sutton reaching out through a social media application designed for homosexual matchmaking.

Sutton's defense team had conceded the fact that a sexual relationship existed, but argued that the former officer was neither an educator nor an employee of Caney Creek High School during the affair.

Defense attorney Bill Patillo called the prosecution's case against Sutton "a red herring," full of attempts to appeal to the jury's emotions and adopt a loose definition of "employee."

Patillo argued Thursday that there was no evidence indicating Sutton and the student were ever on the Caney Creek High School campus at the same time.

Montgomery County prosecutors Jeff Hohl and Tiana Sanford argued Thursday that Sutton

started grooming the student well before there was sexual contact by taking advantage of his authority, power and access over the student and even others at the CISD Police Department.

Sutton resigned from his position Feb. 17, 2013, after the student's then boyfriend – UIL referee Brian Joseph Ortiz, who also has been charged with improper relationship between an educator and student – threatened to alert the media of Sutton's relationship with the student, according to court documents.