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Substitute Teacher Speaks Out After Brawl With Student

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FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. -- A brawl between a substitute teacher and a student was caught on camera.

The fight got the teacher in trouble with the law, but on Tuesday that teacher spoke exclusively to NBC 6 after being acquitted on all charges.

Police arrested a substitute teacher at a Fort Lauderdale high school for striking a student, but a jury found the teacher not guilty.

Cell phone video of the fight during class was released. Substitute teacher Joseph Brazer can be seen in a headlock in the video.

Brazer can be seen trying to calm a student, who then punches him in the face.

"It was scary, and I was frightened," Brazer said.

The same student who hit him told police that Brazer threw the first punch.

"When police finally came back, they told me I was under arrest," Brazer said.

He was charged with battery.

"That was the most depressing moment of my life, being in jail," he said.

Brazer, a Peace Corp volunteer, said he substituted for years at Whiddon-Rodgers Education Center -- a school for students with special needs.

"Students would walk in and out of that classroom," Brazer said. "There was a lot of profanity and name-calling toward me."

Brazer said he had prior run-ins with Sheldon Davis, the student that struck him. On the day Brazer was arrested, Davis allegedly was throwing books.

"As I went to restrain him, he leaned over and fell on the floor," Brazer said. "He got up and started attacking me."

That's when the cell phone video began. Fort Lauderdale police said that what can't be seen is how the fight got started. They said the teacher could have gone too far in restraining the student.

"That cell phone was the clincher in this case," said attorney Robyn Blake.

Blake, who defended Brazer, said the jury gasped when shown the video. Davis' testimony also didn't help state prosecutors, she said.

"(Davis) was honest enough to tell us he lied to police," Blake said.

Brazer said he'll never return to Whidden-Rogers and may file a civil suit.

"I'm upset at the school board and the police department," Brazer said. "I feel what they did was criminal."

The Fort Lauderdale Police Department said that they stand by their actions, and said that the state decided to prosecute the case.

The school board said it conducted its own investigation of the matter, and the jury's decision has no bearing on its actions.

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