



E17 Do We Have the Right Guy? Connecting One Suspect to Two Brutal Attempted Sexual Assaults in Neighboring Police Jurisdictions

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After attending this presentation, attendees will learn the details surrounding two brutal attempted rapes which occurred on a cold night in November 2005 on the campus of Purdue University. The offender of these attacks was quickly apprehended and the subsequent investigation led to a criminal conviction.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by detailing forensic tasks which occurred as part of the criminal investigation as well as investigative strategies which were employed. The techniques which the suspect used to conceal his identity will be presented to educate the attendees as to these methods. The results of forensic laboratory examination, which helped lead to conviction, and lessons learned at trial will also be discussed.

The details of this case began just before 9:00 p.m. on November 29, 2005, when the Purdue University Police Department received an emergency 911 call which reported a possible sexual assault in the parking lot of a university sorority. A basic description of the suspect was obtained, and officers responded to the scene, looking for a “skinny-framed,” White male who had fled from the scene in an unknown direction.

Approximately 90 minutes later and 1.5 miles away, a second attack was reported, this time to the West Lafayette Police Department, as it occurred within their jurisdiction. Although the manner of the reported attack seemed similar, the description of the suspect was wildly different from the first attack. This description was that of a large, muscular Black male.

Shortly thereafter, a day-shift patrol sergeant, who had been working an overtime assignment, began patrolling the area between the attacks at his own initiative. He soon located an individual, matching the second suspect’s description, who appeared to be following a female who was walking down the sidewalk. Upon closer investigation, it was clear that the person had blood visible on his clothes and hands. He was then approached by officers and detained for further investigation. After a few initial denials, and a story about a bloody nose, he was taken into custody.

At the time of his detention, the suspect clearly resembled the description of the second attacker and immediate evidence as to his possible involvement in the first attack was yet to be provided by laboratory analysis.

The next night, another sexual assault was reported in the same area. This second night with a reported attack caused great alarm within and around the community. There was a question that had to be answered for investigators, more quickly than laboratory results could provide: Did they have the right suspect?

An unorthodox solution was thought of by a Purdue detective who made a call to a bloodhound handler with whom he had worked in the past. With the help of “Sam” the bloodhound and her trusty nose, investigators were able to connect, albeit circumstantially, the suspect of the first crime.

Later, the investigation proved that prior to the first attack, the suspect had fashioned a mask out of a tee-shirt to conceal his identity, and had even gone back to his residence to change clothes, prior to committing the second attempted rape.

This presentation will detail the forensic evidence which was collected and the eventual laboratory DNA results. Techniques utilized and lessons learned about the challenges of a complex investigation will also be discussed as well as the eventual sentence received by the suspect.

Attempted Rape, DNA, Bloodhound