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Lawyer of the Week: Brian Spiro

Linda Tsang

Brian Spiro, a partner at BCL Burton Copeland, acts for the musician Amy Winehouse, who was arrested recently over a secret video filmed of her apparently taking drugs. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has now confirmed that no action will be taken against her.



What were the main challenges in this case and the possible implications?

Apart from the very real problem of getting into a police station surrounded by 200 journalists and paparazzi, it was necessary to ensure that the police and CPS conducted an independent and objective investigation when it appeared as if the agenda was being set by the tabloid press. The case raised a number of legal issues, including questions as to the strength and admissibility of evidence obtained from *The Sun*. And it shows that the law will be applied properly and equally to all, regardless of their status and irrespective of attempts by sections of the media to exert pressure on the prosecuting authorities.

What was your worst day as a lawyer?

In my early days as a duty solicitor at Bow Street Magistrates' Court I was representing a man charged with indecent exposure. The CPS applied for him to be remanded in custody for psychiatric assessment. I was in the middle of what I thought was an eloquent and persuasive bail application, vehemently refuting the suggestions that the accused was anything other than innocent and sane, when the chairman of the bench suggested I might care to pause for a moment, turn round and consult my client. He was standing in the dock — stark naked.

What was your most memorable experience as a lawyer?

I represented two defendants in the Jubilee Line fraud case. It was in the Old Bailey on March 22, 2005, that, after five years of preparation and two years of trial, they were acquitted finally.

Who has been the most influential person in your life and why?

My former principal, Anthony Burton, who showed me how to apply

tenacity and imagination to the work of the defence lawyer, and my wife, Charlotte, who has shown me that there is more to life than work and Manchester United.

Why did you become a lawyer?

I wanted a stress-free life that didn't involve wearing a suit.

What would your advice be to anyone wanting a career in law?

Make sure you do it for the right reasons.

If you had not become a lawyer, what would you have chosen and why?

A professor of aeronautical engineering so that I could tell people "it is rocket science".

Where do you see yourself in ten years?

It would be nice to think that I will be lounging on the beach at Englishman's Bay, Tobago, with a cold Red Stripe, looking younger, fitter and relaxed. I will probably be at my desk, feeling stressed and still wearing a suit.