

Williams acquitted in Tulane bribery trial

NEW ORLEANS (UPI) — Former Tulane University basketball star John "Hot Rod" Williams was acquitted Monday of all charges in his sports bribery retrial.

It took the five woman, one man jury 2 1/2 hours to acquit Williams of two counts of sports bribery and three counts of criminal conspiracy to commit sports bribery.

Defense attorney Michael Green hugged Williams when the verdict was read.

Williams' mother, wife, son, and leukemia-stricken high school coach, Tommy Wall, were present in the courtroom.

There was little obvious reaction in the courtroom. Judge Patrick Quinlan of Orleans Parish District Court had warned the audience against outbursts.

Williams, a second-round draft pick of the Cleveland Cavaliers last year, was accused of scheming with eight others to shave points off Tulane's score in games against Southern Mississippi and Memphis State in February 1985.

A trial in August ended in a mistrial.

"I feel great," Williams, 24, said outside the courthouse. "I feel like I can go on and do the things I want to do in life."

Williams — who could not play in the NBA while the charges were pending — said he planned to earn a pro slot.

"I'm going to be with somebody, and I'm going to make the team, I can tell you that," he said.

Williams also said "no feelings" toward the former teammates who testified against him.

"The good Lord is going to take care of that," he said.

Green said he was concerned that the trial nonetheless would haunt Williams in his pro career.

"There is going to come a day when he is going to miss a free

throw and someone is going to say something to him that will hurt," Green said. He asked sports fans to remember that the six jurors heard all the evidence and decided Williams was innocent.

"Just give him his day in the sun," Green said. "That's what he was put on this earth to do."

"I'm not so ignorant not to know that John Williams is being railroaded and the engineer is in this building," defense attorney Michael Green said, referring to assistant district attorney Eric Dubelier, who headed a point-shaving investigation that led to the indictment.

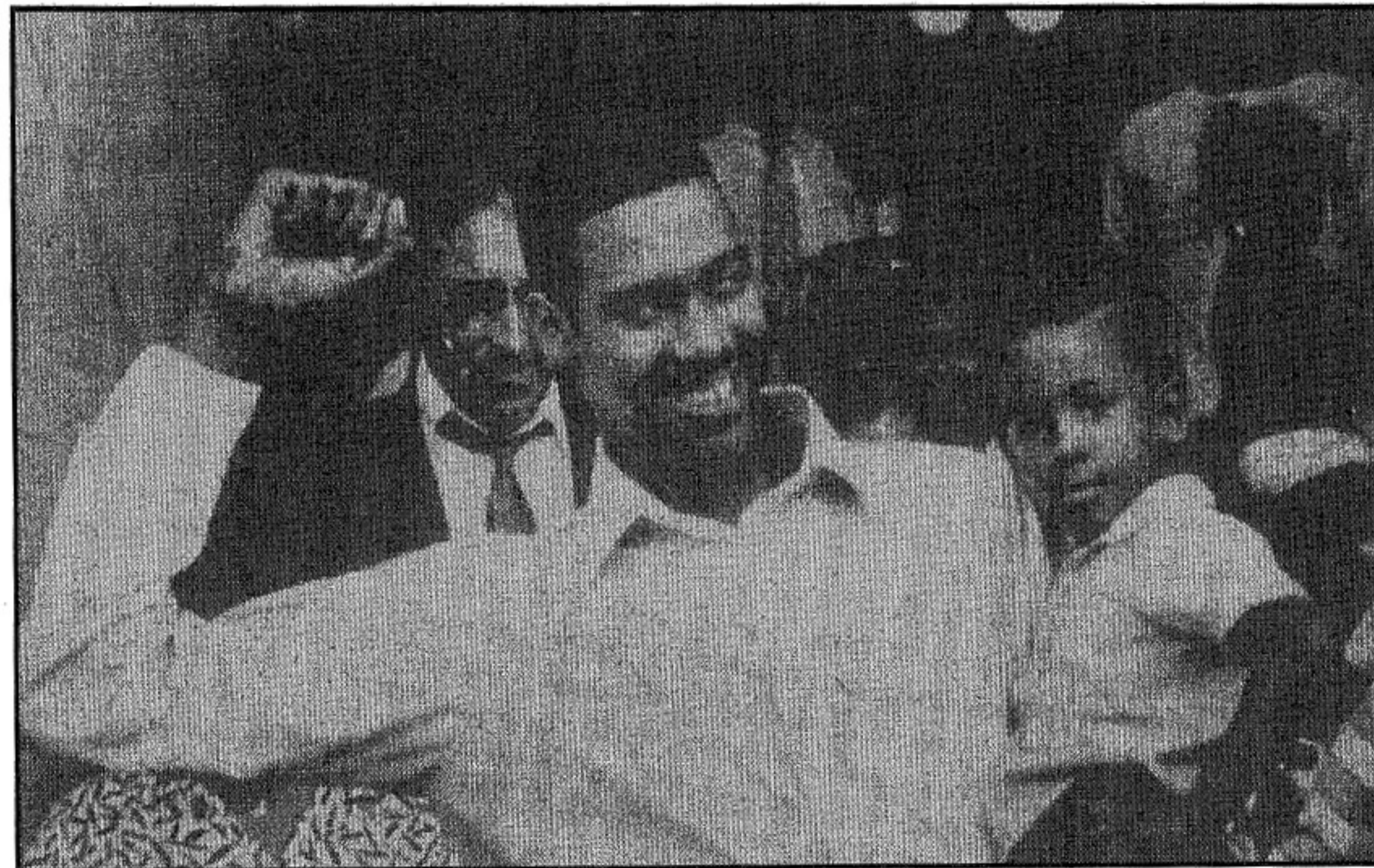
Green characterized Gary Krantz,

a key prosecution witness and alleged mastermind of the point-shaving scheme, as a "charming, handsome, pathological liar."

"That kid sat there and spit on you," Green said to the jury of five women and one man.

The case was expected to go the jury of five women and one man after a recess for lunch.

Assistant District Attorney Dale Atkins earlier said it took only common sense to know there was point-shaving scheme and Williams was the key.



Associated Press

WILLIAMS ACQUITTED. John "Hot Rod" Williams, carrying his son John Jr., leaves the courts building in New Orleans after a jury acquitted him on all counts of sports bribery. Williams had been charged with point-shaving in two Tulane University basketball games. (Story, Page D2.)

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