

JUSTICE: Hockey player in N.Y.

Sex charges to trial next month

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Stouffville's Bobby Hughes has rejected a plea deal and will go on trial next month.

Jury selection for the case, in which 22-year-old Mr. Hughes is charged with committing first and third degree sex acts, begins June 1.

The charges stem from an October 2008 incident in Delmar, N.Y., a hamlet in the town of Bethlehem. The alleged victim is a 40-year-old woman from Bethlehem.

"There was a brief consensual relationship, Bobby being one of them," said his lawyer Robert Molloy last November when Mr. Hughes was arrested. "No non-consensual behaviour occurred. We're certain he will be vindicated."

Mr. Hughes was arrested Nov. 10 in Connecticut by the U.S. Marshal Violent Crime Fugitive Task force following a game at his team's home arena. He was playing for the Bridgeport Sound Tigers at the time.

RELATIONSHIP WAS CONSENSUAL: DEFENCE

Following his arrest in Connecticut, Mr. Hughes posted a \$100,000 bond and made the three-hour trip to Albany, where he was arraigned, posted a \$50,000 bond and handed over his Canadian passport.

In January, Mr. Hughes rejected a deal - plead guilty to the third-degree criminal sex act charge and receive a two-year jail term.

If convicted of committing the first-degree criminal sex act, Mr. Hughes could face up to 25 years in prison.

Mr. Hughes was the Carolina Hurricanes' fourth round pick in the 2006 NHL draft.

Mr. Hughes played with the Hurricanes' top farm team, the Albany River Rats of the American Hockey League, for two seasons before being traded to the Bridgeport Sound Tigers, which is the New York Islanders' top farm team.

Mr. Hughes was assigned to the Islanders' East Coast Hockey League affiliate, the Utah Grizzlies, last November. In March, he was reassigned to the Wichita Thunder of the Central league.



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