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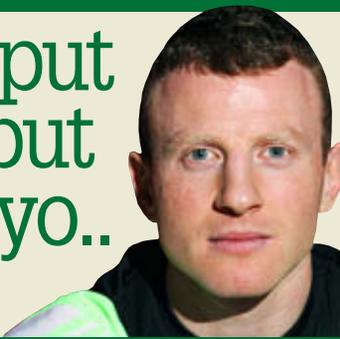
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COLM BOYLE'S EXCLUSIVE COLUMN: PAGE 45



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THUG SOLDIER'S PLEA TO KEEP JOB

WHINE OF DUTY

BRUTE Cathal Crotty yesterday

EXCLUSIVE BY PAUL HEALY

A SOLDIER who beat a woman in an unprovoked attack would like to keep his job after she called for him to be dismissed.

The Irish Mirror tracked down 22-year-old Cathal Crotty yesterday as a court's decision to let him walk free sparked a political storm.

The private who punched Natasha O'Brien at least six times pleaded: "I just want it to be over."

Ms O'Brien, who was badly injured, was praised for her bravery by the Defence Forces and Taoiseach Simon Harris as she hit out at the court system.

FULL STORY: PAGES 4&5

STORM Crotty & Natasha O'Brien

Cowardly Crotty whinges after he's spared jail for attacking woman




SOLDIER THUG PLEADS FOR JOB AS VICTIM DEMANDS HIS DISMISSAL



CRITICISM Tom Clonan and Sarah Benson

Senator's questions over role of officer

SENATOR Tom Clonan, a former Army captain, said he plans to ask Defence Minister Micheal Martin to clarify the language used by Private Cathal Crotty's commanding officer about the soldier in court.

The Defence Forces yesterday said that Commandant Paul Togher's description of Crotty as an "exemplary" soldier was a conduct rating used in his service record.

Cmdt Togher was in court to provide army chiefs with a report on proceedings.

However, Senator Clonan said he had questions over why the comment was provided during the sentence hearing.

He said that Crotty had pleaded guilty and Cmdt Togher had not been called upon as part of Crotty's defence.

The Senator said: "It is normal for officers of the Defence Forces to be witnesses for the State when soldiers are tried for criminal offences.

"I would have attended trials of soldiers who were charged with serious assault."

He told RTE Radio 1's News at One: "The officer will read into the court record, on request, the soldier's service record.

"There is a series of categories that would be read into the record.

"My only question about this is that this did not go to trial, and this soldier pleaded guilty, and his sentence was suspended."

He added: "Whilst in a trial, as part of their defence, a soldier is entitled to have their service record read about by a witness of the State.

"But I'm not sure about the context in which the reference was given during the sentencing hearing.

"So I intend to raise this in the Seanad next Tuesday, just to get a clarification from the minister and from the military authorities."

Meanwhile, Sarah Benson of the charity Women's Aid in her reaction said last night: "This case tells us that we are not in a good place when it comes to the perpetration of violence against women."



EXCLUSIVE BY PAUL HEALY

A SOLDIER spared jail over savagely beating a woman in the street told us he wants to stay in the army - as his victim called for his dismissal.

Private Cathal Crotty, 22, received a three-year suspended sentence on Thursday over a brutal assault on passerby Natasha O'Brien in Limerick in 2022.

Crotty beat Ms O'Brien unconscious after she asked him to stop shouting gay slurs - and later boasted about it on social media.

We tracked down Crotty at his home in Parkroe Heights in Ardnacrusha, Co Clare following the sentence - with the young thug answering the door alongside his father Paul.

An angered Cathal Crotty first refused to engage with us, telling this reporter: "I just don't trust you man. I just want this to be over. You'll twist my words."

Asked if he was sorry for his actions Crotty said he was "not answering" our questions - but when we asked if he wanted to return to his job in the Defence Forces, who are now separately investigating his actions he said: "Of course."

Crotty's father meanwhile, who told us his name was Paul, went on at length to blame the media.

"I'm his father. You know and I know it's the media that's put him here as well," he said.

"Because in court he got his case squashed and a suspended sentence.

"But it's the media that's put him further into it.

"Am I right? Yes I am. It's the public media that's incriminated him from here on in," he claimed.

Crotty's

BACK HOME Cathal Crotty yesterday and, above, in army uniform



BRAVE VICTIM Natasha O'Brien outside court

» Crotty won't answer when asked if he's sorry and dad blames media

father continued by saying the judge had given his son a suspended

sentence - but claiming he was now being further punished by media and social media.

"It's the media that's put him here, not the court.

"The court has done his case, and this is the way it's gone. And now it's media, Snapchat, Facebook, RTE news, blah, blah, blah, after the fact.

"That's what's going to drive him deeper down.

"Because if it was good news, you wouldn't be here. If it's bad news you would.

"That's the facts," he claimed.

Asked if he believed his son was sorry for his actions he said: "Of course he'd be sorry like but it's

just as far as I can see the media are a court of law not the court of law itself.

"Whatever justice the court is supposed

There should be immediate dismissal for harm caused by a soldier to a civilian

NATASHA O'BRIEN YESTERDAY

OF COURSE I WANT TO GO BACK TO THE ARMY

» Natasha was 'terrified' to see brute in court and wants him booted out

to be for that case, well it's gone past that now. "If you think about it, it's the media that's going to drive it deeper and deeper."

At this point Cathal Crotty, who had retreated inside the house, shouted at his father and said: "Dad will you shut up talking there and send him away."

Meanwhile, victim Natasha O'Brien said Crotty should face "immediate dismissal" from the Defence Forces.

She said: "There should be an immediate dismissal for any harm caused (by a soldier) to a civilian. It's cause for an immediate dismissal - absolutely."

She told RTE the attack had left her in a "place of darkness" and suffering symptoms of PTSD, requiring multiple therapist appointments.

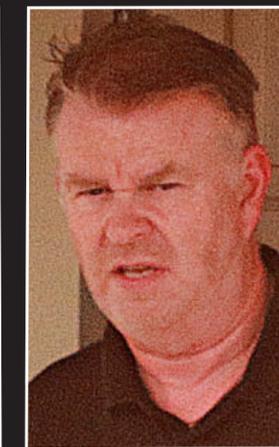
She said: "I just ended up spiralling into self-destructive behaviours, I lost all interest and motivation for life.

"I wasn't able to cope with reality, whether that was staying in bed for days or getting a bottle of wine."

Ms O'Brien said she was sitting "frozen" in the



COMMENTS Cathal Crotty and his dad Paul, right, at home in Co Clare yesterday



I wasn't able to cope with reality, in bed for days or getting a bottle of win

NATASHA O'BRIEN YESTERDAY

"I would like to see some true justice, I would like to see some effective change in the Dail."

"I would like to demand some answers from the Minister for Justice as to what's going on, in terms of the Department of Justice, and the failure of the (criminal justice) system to so many like myself."

Ms O'Brien called for a fresh national debate about the rights of victims in the criminal justice system, which she indicated were seriously lacking.

"That is definitely something that should be opened up for an honest discussion," she said.

"It is one hundred per cent something that should be opened up for discussion because the victim is put on trial and the defendant is represented."

Ms O'Brien said she had not considered taking a civil case against Mr Crotty for injuries.

news@irishmirror.ie



PRAISE Taoiseach Simon Harris

Taoiseach: Thanks to Natasha for bravery

TAOISEACH Simon Harris has praised assault victim Natasha O'Brien for coming forward and speaking out.

Mr Harris said he wanted to create "a very different society for young women".

"I want to thank Natasha O'Brien and praise her for coming forward, for standing up, for speaking out," Mr Harris said, speaking from the Isle of Man.

"I think that is really important. I would encourage any victim or survivor of violence, of gender-based violence, to always come forward."

Asked about the suspended sentence Crotty received, Mr Harris said: "I find myself precluded from being allowed to comment on the sentence of a court despite perhaps having quite a lot that I would have liked being able to say, other than let me say this - the legal process may not be concluded because it is absolutely always open to the DPP to appeal a sentence and also to appeal the leniency of a sentence.

"I need to be particularly careful in that context.

"But we are living in a country where there is still an epidemic of gender-based violence.

"We need to call that and every single person in Irish society, and every single person, no matter what role you're in, has a role to play in relation to this.

"I know as a Government, we remain absolutely determined to create a society where there is a zero-tolerance approach in relation to this.

"We have a zero-tolerance approach in Ireland to sexual violence, to gender-based violence.

"It's really important that every part of society plays its full role in getting us to that zero-tolerance place that we need to be, which we clearly aren't there yet, let's be absolutely categorical about that.

"There is still far too much violence against women in our country.

"I, as a Taoiseach, as a parent, as a father of a daughter, want to create a very different society for young women.

"We should always expect people in our Defence Forces to be people of the highest standards, highest integrity and respect for the law," he added.