

# Former Wests Tigers player Matt Lodge could be forced to pay out millions of dollars for US crime spree

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FORMER Wests Tigers prop Matthew Lodge has secured a plea deal in New York that could let him sidestep a jail sentence, but he still faces paying millions of dollars to the victims of his violent rampage.

Lodge entered a guilty plea to a misdemeanour reckless assault charge in a Manhattan court on Tuesday. He faces a maximum sentence of one year in jail when sentenced on June 17.

The more serious charges of felony burglary, and burglary of dwelling causing injury charges, with a minimum five-year and maximum 25-year jail sentence, were dismissed.

The victims of the troubled 20-year-old's night of terror slapped Lodge with a 17-page civil lawsuit on Monday containing frightening allegations of the violence and threats attributed to the 193cm tall, 110kg rugby league player inflicted at about 4am on October 16.

"The lives of five innocent people, including a boy of nine-years-old, were forever changed by the vicious and violent attacks by defendant Matthew Lodge, a professional rugby player with a history of violence and animosity towards women," the lawsuit states.

It describes how Carolin Dekeyser and a female friend were getting out of a cab near their friend's Upper West Side apartment when "a thickly-muscled, visibly intoxicated" Lodge approached and spoke aggressively to the driver.

The cabbie urged Ms Dekeyser and her friend to get to the apartment and then he drove away, according to the lawsuit.



Lodge allegedly began asking the women to return to Australia with him and then threatened them by saying, "This is the night you die".

The women ran to their friend's building but Lodge followed, grabbed Ms Dekeyser by the shoulders, spun her around to face him and "began to ramble about his desire to take the women to Australia to meet his family".

The women buzzed all 10 apartments in the building and Lodge followed them into the foyer.

Joseph Cartright, a photographer and resident, heard the buzzer and went to the front door to help.

The women allegedly ran to their friend Guillaume Roemaet's apartment and when a shirtless, tattooed Roemaet came out to see if he could help, Lodge allegedly said: "You don't scare me. I have tattoos too. I'm going to kill you".

Mr Roemaet allegedly pushed the women back into his apartment and locked the door and Lodge forced himself into Mr Cartright's apartment, where his wife Ruth Fowler and nine-year-old son were. Lodge allegedly paced inside and said: "My name is Matthew Lodge. I come in peace. Salaam Alaikum," and then walked into the bedroom where Ms Fowler was in bed calling police.

The lawsuit says Salaam Alaikum is a common "peace to you" greeting among Muslims.

Mr Cartright allegedly attempted to cajole Lodge outside their front door and once outside, Ms Fowler closed the door. Lodge allegedly became "enraged" and "grabbed Mr Cartright, put him in a headlock and repeatedly punched Mr Cartright in the head, landing multiple blows to his left ear and skull".

Lodge allegedly ran back into the apartment and shoved furniture behind the door to prevent Mr Cartright from getting in.

Ms Fowler grabbed her son and locked themselves in a bathroom, placed her back against the door and used the sink as leverage. Lodge allegedly was in the kitchen smashing plates and glasses and then attempted to punch his way into the bathroom and "wood splintered around her head and into the bathroom".

When eight NYPD officers arrived Lodge allegedly threw a two-litre bottle of wine at them.

Fearing a hostage situation, the police entered the apartment with their guns drawn, but found Lodge cowering in a bedroom closet, according to the lawsuit.