

# Former NRL player Matthew Lodge avoids jail in US over 2015 rampage

Monday 19 December 2016

theguardian.com

A New York judge has declined to send former [West's Tigers](#) prop Matthew Lodge back to jail, instead making him a free man and setting up a possible return to the NRL.

Lodge was originally charged with felony burglary causing injury, which carried a minimum of five years' jail and a maximum of 25 years, after terrorising a family early on 16 October last year.

Joseph Cartright, on behalf of his wife Ruth and nine-year-old son, made a last-ditch, emotional plea to the judge, Kate Paek, to punish Lodge for the "violent and horrifying conduct" that caused physical and psychological pain to his family.

The judge declined.

In a plea deal signed a year ago with prosecutors, Lodge entered a guilty plea to a misdemeanour count of reckless assault. The victims opposed the deal.

To avoid a one-year jail sentence Lodge was ordered to complete 200 hours of community service in Australia, receive alcohol abuse and anger treatment, abstain from alcohol and illegal drugs, submit to testing and avoid another arrest.

In a brief hearing on Monday, Paek was told Lodge had adhered to the deal and she sentenced him to a conditional discharge. Lodge, 21, was not required to be in court for the sentencing and remained in Australia.

Lodge had confronted two women as they stepped out of a cab, told them it was the "night you will die" and forced his way into their apartment building.

Cartright, who had a unit near the foyer, went to help the women, but Lodge put him in a headlock and punched him in the face.

Lodge also went into Cartright's apartment, locked the door, began breaking plates and furniture and then attempted to smash down the door to a bathroom where Cartright's wife and son were hiding.

Lodge was arrested at gunpoint by NYPD officers. The family has required psychological treatment, with Cartright telling the court his son had trouble sleeping and socialising.

Renan Varghese, who is representing the family and another female victim in a \$US1.2m lawsuit filed against Lodge in [New York](#), said his clients were "obviously disappointed".

"They had thought in light of the complete lack of remorse he has showed for his conduct perhaps the court would have deviated from the plea agreement," he said.

Lodge's lawyer, Thomas Rotko, said Lodge had "worked very hard to address the issues which led to his arrest" and would continue to do so when the case was over.

Lodge, who was sacked by West's Tigers after his arrest, appears set to play for the Brisbane Broncos' Queensland Rugby League feeder club, the Redcliffe Dolphins.