Linebacker slaps Peel Police with a big lawsuit

Orlando Bowen is suing the Peel police

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Allegations of racism and wrongdoing are at the heart of a $14 million lawsuit filed against Peel Regional Police by a former CFL linebacker.

Orlando Bowen, 30, says he was cuffed, beaten and then framed by two Peel police officers in a Mar. 26, 2004 incident that left him with a concussion, a gash on his head and blackened eyes.

"They fabricated evidence, drugs were planted at the scene, and my life was sent into … a downward spiral," Bowen said Thursday.

The alleged incident happened late at night as Bowen pulled into the parking lot of a Mississauga restaurant. The former Toronto Argonaut was there to meet family and friends. Instead, he was approached by police who – according to Bowen – accused him of concealing drugs.

He alleges the officers beat him and then charged him with resisting arrest and possession of cocaine. Bowen says the drugs were allegedly planted by the officers in an attempt to cover their actions that evening.

"I've never had so much fun in a court of law," defence lawyer David Humphries said of the trial that followed. He said the two officers could not get their stories straight.

The judge ruled the testimony of the arresting officers was not believable and acquitted Bowen of all the charges last December.

Just a month before the acquittal, one of the officers was arrested and charged with possessing and trafficking cocaine. That case is still working its way through the courts.

Bowen is seeking $14.6 million in damages on behalf of his wife, two sons and other family members.

"No person in this country should have to undergo the level of beating, mistreatment and prosecution this man and his family went through because of the colour of his skin," lawyer Julian Falconer said.

The lawsuit names the officers involved at the time of Bowen's arrest and others within the police force.

An administrative review of the incident is being conducted by the force. It is expected to be finished sometime this spring.