

# Dallas real estate executive acquitted of assault in Irving polo mallet case



By [Scott Goldstein](#)

A prominent Dallas real estate professional could learn his fate today on a misdemeanor assault charge in connection with a 2009 Irving polo mallet swing that knocked a man unconscious and gave him a concussion

Authorities say Vaughn Erwin Miller, 50, struck Jorge Cernadas, 29, in the head on purpose during a match at the Las Colinas Equestrian Center. Miller's defense attorney says it was an accident in an inherently dangerous sport.

This case is interesting in part because Miller is the president of the retail division of Henry S. Miller Brokerage LLC and the great-grandson of Henry S. Miller Sr. But it's also important because as defense attorney J. Michael Price II argued on Tuesday, it's rather unusual that someone would be in criminal trouble for an act

committed between the lines of a sports field.

"We're talking about prosecuting acts on a playing field," Price said in a Dallas County courtroom Tuesday. "It was in the field of play within one second."

Price said in his closing argument that this case is not about a criminal act.

"We're here because of civil lawyers. We're here because of this," Price said as he held up a \$1 bill for the jury of four men and two women. "Because of money."

Price argued that Miller has wealthy rivals who were upset with him because his polo team was so dominant and because Miller launched his own polo club that was essentially wiping out the Las Colinas one where the alleged assault occurred. Price said it's those rivals who helped set Cernadas up with high-profile attorneys including former District Attorney Bill Hill, former prosecutor Toby Shook and former U.S. Attorney Michael P. Carnes.

They came after Miller for money and when they didn't get it, Price said, they went to the police five months after the alleged assault.

Cernadas has also sued Miller in Dallas County in connection with the incident and that case is pending. Carnes is his attorney in that lawsuit.

"It was only a crime after money wasn't paid," Price said. "Don't let people abuse and manipulate the criminal justice system." The jury acquitted Miller after a little more than an hour of deliberations.

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