

US judge gives Rod 6 weeks to do deal in 'attack' case

SIR Rod Stewart has six weeks to strike a deal over his assault case or he could end up facing a jury trial, a judge warned last night.

The 75-year-old singer was charged with 'simple battery' after a scuffle with a bouncer on New Year's Eve last year.

His legal team and prosecutors have yet to reach an agreement that would allow him to avoid a court appearance.

Sir Rod's son, Sean, 40, was also charged over the incident. Both have pleaded not guilty.

Security guard Jessie Dixon, 33, alleges Sir Rod punched him in

'We are close to a resolution'

the ribs and that Sean pushed him after he refused them entry to a private event at a hotel in Palm Beach, Florida.

Any deal with prosecutors would likely mean that the pair avoid jail time. But if the case goes to trial, the charges could result in a sentence of one year in prison.

In the latest hearing, a judge granted Sir Rod's lawyers one more chance to reach a deal.

Speaking via Zoom during yesterday's hearing in Florida, Sir Rod's lawyer Guy Fronstin told the judge: 'We have been in a lot of contact [with prosecutors].'

'We are close to a resolution, we are just not quite there yet. So if your honour would give us one

By **Matheus Sanchez** in Florida

more continuance, I think we will have it resolved by then.'

However, Judge August Bonavita, who has already granted three delays since the case was first heard in February, appeared to be growing impatient.

'OK, well, this case is getting old now,' he said, setting the next hearing for January 29.

'This will be a final pre-trial. So if it's not resolved by the next pre-trial, I will put it on the list for jury trial for both cases.'

He added: 'I do want this to be moved along.'

The judge indicated that if an agreement was reached, he would want to rubber-stamp it at the next hearing.

A deal with prosecutors could mean the star pleads guilty to lesser charges or makes a plea of 'no contest'. This is when a defendant does not admit guilt but chooses not to fight the charges, with terms usually including anger management or community service.

'All our discussions so far have been that this will not include any jail,' Sir Rod's lawyer has said previously.

Yesterday, he said: 'Not resolving this sooner is solely due to the impact Covid has on the process.'

Mr Dixon has hired a lawyer to pursue a civil case against Sir Rod and Sean. A lawsuit has not been filed but they have been in talks with the star's team.



Denial: Sir Rod with his wife Penny Lancaster. Inset: Bouncer Jessie Dixon



Line-dancing starlings cut power supply to our village

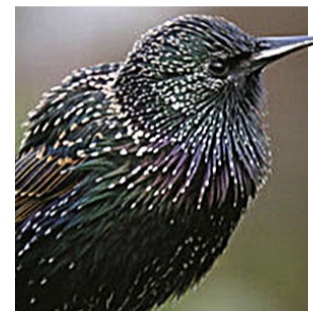
By **George Mair**

WHEN the power supply to a village kept tripping, engineers were left mystified about what could be causing the fault.

But one eagle-eyed worker solved the mystery on his way home from the job - when he noticed thousands of starlings 'dancing' on overhead cables.

Residents in Airth, Stirlingshire, had been hit by a series of unexplained interruptions in recent months.

Around 50 homes in the village experienced trips around dusk, sometimes lasting only minutes at a time, but regular checks and expert investigations on the power lines all found no issues. It was



Aerial stunt: Starling

not until lead district engineer Neil McDonald spotted a mass of thousands of birds landing on the lines.

He said the birds' movement on the overhead power cables made them bounce and clash together, causing the power to trip in response.

Mr McDonald captured the starling spectacle, known as a murmuration, on camera and shared the footage with his SP Energy Network colleagues.

He said: 'The sheer number of them caused the wires to bounce up and down as they danced on and off. We're looking at ways to discourage them from impacting our power lines and will work with the RSPB for the best advice.'

'Hopefully our starling community can be encouraged to safely relocate.'

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