

Penal code wasn't broken in penile frolic with dolphin

LONDON (UPI-Kyodo) A court Friday acquitted animal rights activist Alan Cooper of committing a lewd act with a dolphin, rejecting allegations that his underwater play with the animal constituted sexual behavior.

Onlookers in the Newcastle Upon Tyne Crown Court cheered when the jury delivered a unanimous verdict clearing Cooper of charges of committing a lewd or indecent act in September 1990 with the dolphin, named Freddie.

Cooper, 39, a self-employed gardener, denied the charges of public indecency stemming from an incident in which he frolicked with Freddie for about 20 minutes in front of a group of tourists at a harbor mouth in northeast England.

The prosecution charged that Cooper, from Gorton, Manchester, in northeast England, had deliberately mas-

turbated Freddie as the half-ton, bottle-nosed dolphin lay on its back with his penis erect.

Nearby onlookers in a boat complained to police.

Cooper told the court he was "absolutely outraged and disgusted" by the allegation. He said it had also upset his mother, who died last year as he awaited trial.

"You must have thought that if somebody uses a penis it must be sexual. But it is difficult applying human conceptions to a very intelligent animal like this," Cooper's lawyer, Tony Jennings, told the court.

He argued that the complainants misjudged what they saw, and that dolphins are in the habit of using their penises as sensory devices and often hook them around divers to tow them along.