

Crowe's racist insult led to punch-up

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Actor Russell Crowe's altercation in a London restaurant started after he made racist remarks about the New Zealand Warriors rugby league team, it was claimed yesterday.

And the Sydney-based Oscar winner faced more trouble last night after allegations from a fellow guest at the Japanese eatery that his behaviour had been "despicable".

Georgie Calder, 21, claimed the star had been acting "like a total and utter pig" moments before violence erupted at the trendy Zuma Japanese restaurant last week.

Crowe, an ardent supporter of South Sydney rugby league club, described the Warriors as "a bunch of coconuts" or "darkies", according to *The New Zealand Herald*.

"It was about the skin tone, he was calling them coconuts or darkies," an insider told the Auckland-based newspaper.

Crowe's comments reportedly angered Eric Watson, the millionaire owner of the grand finalist Warriors, and led to the punch-up between the two.

The insider said one of the women at Crowe's table began to cry after his comments, and Watson asked Crowe why he was behaving so irrationally.

"[Watson] left the table to go to the bathroom and while he was there, Crowe confronted him," the insider said.

"From what I can figure out, Eric defended himself well, but the fight was broken up by one of Russell's minders."

After the men were separated, Crowe was confronted by a distressed woman, who clutched at his cheeks.

She has been revealed as Francesca Guise, a New Zealand-born actress who has been in Britain for several months searching for her 15 minutes of fame.

Crowe, 38, was questioned by police after trading blows with Watson on Tuesday night, but will not face charges.



Fellow diners at a London restaurant say Russell Crowe's behaviour was "despicable".

Meanwhile Miss Calder, daughter of British record producer Tony Calder and former model Karen Richardson, yesterday told London's *Daily Mail* the brawl followed a night of appalling behaviour from Crowe.

She told the newspaper how the actor had approached her table after their eyes met across the crowded restaurant in a crude attempt to seduce her.

After introducing himself, Miss Calder claimed, Crowe suddenly kissed her and licked her face.

She claimed she tried to push him away, but the *Gladiator* star asked if she would like to go back to his hotel room. "He was utterly revolting," she said. "He was acting like he owned the place and everyone in it - including me."

Describing Crowe's dishevelled appearance, Miss Calder said: "He was wearing this crusty old shirt and trousers that he hadn't appeared to have changed for several days - and he smelt."

It has emerged that Watson, and companions including Guise, were invited on to Crowe's table by the actor, and exchanged pleasantries before the arguments began.

What was said between Crowe and Watson inside the men's toilets at Zuma is anybody's guess, but the actor came off the worse for wear.

The Warriors' owner regularly trains with Kevin Barry, the coach of New Zealand's heavyweight boxing star David Tua.

Crowe has just completed filming Peter Weir's *Master And Commander* in Mexico.