

Jordan Jefferson pleads no contest to simple battery charge



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Advocate staff photo by ARTHUR D. LAUCK – Former LSU quarterback Jordan Jefferson walks out of East Baton Rouge Parish Prison on Wednesday.

BY JOE GYAN JR.

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Former LSU quarterback Jordan Jefferson, dressed in a bright orange prison jumpsuit, pleaded no contest Wednesday to a misdemeanor simple battery charge stemming from an August 2011 fight outside a Baton Rouge bar.

State District Judge Chip Moore put the 22-year-old Jefferson on supervised bench probation for one year and ordered him to perform 30 hours of community service work. The judge said he would like Jefferson to speak to incoming LSU freshmen and to students at area schools.

Jefferson also must remain alcohol- and drug-free. He will be randomly tested.

Moore allowed Jefferson to be released Wednesday from East Baton Rouge Parish Prison. The judge sent him there a day earlier after determining Jefferson had violated a term of his bond in the battery case by being arrested last week on a drug-related count.

The no contest plea that Jefferson entered in the battery case carries the same weight as a guilty plea in criminal court but cannot be used as an admission of guilt in civil court.

Jefferson, former LSU linebacker Joshua Johns and DBJ Interests LLC, doing business as Shady's bar, were sued in May by four men, including Andrew Lowery, who claim they were attacked Aug. 19, 2011, outside the East Boyd Drive bar without provocation. The suit is pending in state court in Baton Rouge.

"He still believes he is innocent," James Manasseh, who represented Jefferson at Wednesday's proceeding, said after court.

Jefferson told Moore he plans to enroll at LSU in December and complete his education. He said he has one semester remaining.

"I want you to graduate," the judge replied.

Lance Unglesby, who represents Jefferson but was unable to be with him Wednesday, said later in the day that Jefferson "saw this as an opportunity to move on and begin a new chapter in his life."

"I look forward to watching him make a positive impact in the community for years to come," Unglesby added.

Moore said he will review Jefferson's probation on Jan. 25.

Jefferson told the judge that his legal predicament has "opened my eyes to a lot of things." Jefferson added he now knows what he needs to do.

Moore talked with Jefferson about the promise and peril of being in the "spotlight" as a star athlete.

"With that comes good things and not-so-good things," the judge said.

Jefferson and three other former LSU football players — ex-Heisman trophy finalist and All-American cornerback Tyrann Mathieu, Derrick Bryant and Karnell Hatcher — were arrested last Thursday after 10 bags containing 18 grams of "high-grade marijuana," a marijuana grinder and a digital scale were found inside Mathieu's West State Street apartment, Baton Rouge police have said.

"He's indicated he's innocent," Manasseh said of Jefferson and his charge of simple possession of marijuana.

East Baton Rouge Parish District Attorney Hillar Moore III said his office handled Jefferson's battery case like it does that of any other defendant.

"Bottom line is this is a misdemeanor. It's just another case," he said.

The district attorney said he agrees with the judge's desire to have Jefferson speak at area schools.

"He could use his experience and stature to help," Moore said.

When asked if he would allow Jefferson to speak to the LSU football team, coach Les Miles said he was not opposed to the idea, adding that he thought Jefferson would have "a great message."

During the incident outside Shady's, Lowery suffered a fractured jaw and was kicked unconscious, his attorney, Michael Bienvenu, has said.

Lowery told police that Jefferson and Johns were among a group of people who attacked him outside Shady's.

Jefferson and Johns were arrested and booked on one count each of second-degree battery, a felony. An East Baton Rouge Parish grand jury indicted Jefferson on a lesser charge of simple battery. Johns was not indicted.

In the drug case, Mathieu is charged with simple possession of marijuana. Hatcher was booked on one count of second-offense simple possession of marijuana, and Bryant was booked on one count each of possession with intent to distribute marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia.