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## Deputies' trial opens in 'abuse of power' case

Officers say boy, 15, was difficult to handle

By ERICA BLAKE

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Jacob Sanford, 15, sat in a cell at the Lucas County Juvenile Justice Center shaking and crying while the two sheriff's deputies who violated his civil rights "went off to concoct a lie," a federal prosecutor said.

But while prosecutors with the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division call the actions of Deputies Troy Jackson and Marc Odoms an "abuse of power," defense attorneys painted a picture of two men who were trying to restrain an unruly youth.

The trial for the two deputies accused of both civil rights and obstruction charges began with opening statements yesterday in U.S. District Court in Toledo.

Federal authorities alleged that on Jan. 20, 2005, Deputy Jackson assaulted the handcuffed teenager several times in the face and that Deputy Odoms failed to intervene.

They also are accused of lying about the incident in departmental reports and giving false testimony at the teenager's trial on felony assault.

"This is a case about abuse of power, of two law enforcement officers who took it upon themselves to punish a misbehaving 15-year-old boy, not within the limits of the law, but by beating him and then lying about it," Kristy Parker, a Washington-based prosecutor, told the jury of 11 women and two men. "A sworn law enforcement officer punched an unresisting, handcuffed juvenile in the face while another sworn officer watched."

Prosecutors called several witnesses yesterday, including civilian staff members of the Juvenile Justice Center and law enforcement officers who offer training in proper ways to restrain resisting detainees.

A former nurse at the Juvenile Justice Center testified about the injuries Jacob sustained while in

See **DEPUTIES**, Page 2

# Deputies

Continued from Page 1

the intake area of the facility.

Kathleen Zielinski, who was let go as an employee of the center, said she observed bruising and swelling around Jacob's left eye, his face, and his neck.

In fact, she was concerned enough about the extent of the injuries that she requested that Jacob be taken to a local emergency room for X-rays to determine whether his eye socket or cheek bones had been fractured, she said.

With photos she took displayed for the jury, Ms. Zielinski said Jacob told her he was thrown

on the floor and punched in the face by a deputy.

Ms. Zielinski also testified that she encountered Deputy Jackson on her way to examine Jacob and that he told her the boy attempted to head-butt him, but that the 4-foot, 11-inch, 120-pound Jacob had only been able to reach his shirt pocket.

Cleveland-based attorney Dominic Vitantonio, who is representing Deputy Jackson, pointed out that Ms. Zielinski was not an eyewitness to what took place within the center when Jacob was being brought into the intake area.

Both prosecutors and the defense acknowledged that the teenager was combative and that he resisted each of the

personnel attempting to subdue him.

Mr. Vitantonio said the teenager was able to head-butt Deputy Jackson before they could bring him under control.

"They were doing their job — an ugly job, and they were doing it under difficult circumstances," Mr. Vitantonio said during his opening statement.

Deputy Odoms' attorney, Clyde Bennett of Cincinnati, questioned the witnesses about whether they knew Deputy Odoms was present when Deputy Jackson was trying to restrain the teenager.

The witnesses who testified yesterday could not say if he was.

Mr. Bennett told the jury that

the only reason Deputy Odoms was in court was because he attempted to assist another deputy in controlling an inmate.

But prosecutors said both men should have known how to deal with a hysterical inmate without using what they believed was excessive force.

Sheriff's Deputy Matthew Luettkie, a trainer for the department, testified that each deputy is trained in the use of force.

He added that each deputy is required to sign a Use of Force Policy as well as an Oath of Office, which requires each deputy to swear to uphold the laws of both the U.S. and Ohio constitutions.

The deputies each face up to 10 years in prison and fines of

\$250,000 if found guilty of the criminal charges.

Deputy Odoms, who also is accused of making false statements, faces an additional five years in prison.

Both men were cleared of wrongdoing in an internal investigation and maintain positions with the sheriff's department.

A spokesman for the department could not be reached for comment yesterday.

The trial, which began Friday with jury selection, will resume today with Judge Jack Zouhary presiding. It is expected to last all week.

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