

Ex-OSU guard scores victory with acquittal

By Tim Doulin
Dispatch Staff Reporter

Former Ohio State basketball player Trent Jackson was relieved but tight-lipped yesterday after he was acquitted of charges stemming from an altercation with Columbus police outside a campus-area nightclub.

A Franklin County Municipal Court jury deliberated about an hour before finding Jackson, 19, not guilty of misdemeanor charges of disorderly conduct and resisting arrest.

Police had accused Jackson of grabbing an officer's arm while the officer was trying to arrest another OSU basketball player, Damon Stringer.

The incident occurred outside The Edge Night Club, 1576 N. High Street, about 2 a.m. on Aug. 22.

"This has been weighing on me since summer, so I'm relieved with the way things came out," Jackson said. "My plan is to make the dean's list while I'm at Ohio State and then go from there."

A reserve guard for OSU last season, Jackson is enrolled at the university and remains on a basketball scholarship, though he was dismissed from the team Sept. 8.

At the time, coach Jim O'Brien said Jackson was dismissed for failing to live up to his obligations as a student-athlete.

"What is the coach going to say now that Trent is cleared of this?" Jackson's father, Trent Jackson Sr., said. "Is O'Brien going to be man enough to pull Trent into the office and talk to him now?"

The elder Jackson said O'Brien has told him that there was more to his son's dismissal than the arrest.

"What coach O'Brien told me over the phone was that Trent was a poor student," Jackson Sr. said. "At the time of his dismissal, Trent had a 2.4 grade-point average. He told me there were some other incidents. That Trent did not go to weight conditioning out of season."

The father accused O'Brien of trying to squeeze his son out of the basketball program. O'Brien had no comment last night.

OSU has notified Jackson in

writing that his scholarship will not be renewed July 1.

Trent Jackson said he doesn't have any immediate plans to play basketball — at OSU or anywhere else.

"Not right now," he said. "I'm just trying to be the best student I can be right now. What happens later on down the road happens."

The jury heard testimony this week from a Columbus police officer who identified Trent Jackson as the person who grabbed him while the officer tried to subdue Stringer.

Sgt. Steve Hope testified that Jackson and Stringer were part of a group he had ordered to move along after the nightclub closed. Officers arrested Stringer when he failed to leave after they said he was told three times to move.

Officer Thomas DeWitt identified Jackson from the witness stand as the person who grabbed his arm.

In closing arguments, Clyde Bennett, one of Jackson's attorneys, questioned why the prosecution couldn't produce more than one witness who could identify Jackson as the person who grabbed the officer.

Jackson testified yesterday that he had left the nightclub shortly before Stringer and was not part of the group that was being asked by police to move. He said he was walking south on High Street when he looked back and saw Stringer involved in commotion with police.

Jackson said he never grabbed an officer and didn't even get close enough to do so. He said he was Maced by an officer right after he shouted to police that Stringer had a bad back.

Earlier this week, the city dropped similar charges against Stringer.