

# Jury splits verdict in beating of 2 guards

## Inmate cleared of 5 counts, convicted of felony assault

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*The Daily Item*

SUNBURY — After more than 20 hours of testimony, a 22-year-old state prisoner who lacks a high school diploma and who represented himself in Northumberland County Court, convinced a jury to acquit him of five of six charges after he said he was defending himself when being attacked by guards.

While the jury convicted Dashaun Jamison, of York, of one count of aggravated assault for a November 2010 incident at the State Correctional Institution at Coal Township, one by one jurors said they were impressed with how he presented his case.

"I took on the Northumberland County district attorney's office," Jamison said after the 11 p.m. verdict on Tuesday, "and I won."

Jamison, an inmate at Northumberland County Prison, does not have a law degree.

"The guy was great," said an alternate juror, who declined to give her name. "He was so well-spoken."

Jamison was charged by state police at Stonington with two felony counts of aggravated assault and two of attempted aggravated assault. He was also charged with two misdemeanor counts of simple assault after two prison guards were taken to a hospital following a November 2010 incident at the State Correctional Institution at Coal Township.

He was found guilty of one of the aggravated assaults, a decision for which some jurors actually apologized.

"I'll appeal that one because I don't think the jury

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understood completely," Jamison said. "(The jury) did a great job, though."

Jamison insisted he was being mistreated and set up to get beaten by prison guards. He said he was defending himself in striking the guards.

The incident was caught on video surveillance and played throughout the trial.

Jamison strolled around the courtroom and asked each of the state's witnesses question after question, even badgering a state police detective.

## Surveillance video

The surveillance shows Jamison and guards in a fistfight as well as Jamison being overpowered and placed inside a holding cell.

Jamison, who was housed in the Restrictive Housing Unit at SCI Coal Township in 2010, was locked in his cell 23 of 24 hours a day.

No cell door is opened unless there is a reason, Jamison told jurors.

"They open for showers, recreational time and other cases, but it isn't something that is done without guards knowing," he said.

On Nov. 18, 2010, Jamison's cell door was "popped" open and a beating was about to be delivered, Jamison said.

## Repeated complaints

Jamison told jurors and provided documents that for weeks before, he was filing repeated grievances and complaints against guards alleging harassment.

He said he knew the day would come when they would retaliate.

Jamison told jurors he came out of his cell and defended himself when he got into the altercation with guards.

"I did what I had to do," he told jurors. "I was protecting myself."

During the trial, Jamison would refer to law books, several hundred pages of notes and official prison documents and at times, stumped several prison guards and prison officials who testified.

Jamison had three state inmates testify—one of whom was brought to the county from Rikers Island in New York City—that they knew guards were out to get Jamison.

Each of the prisoners were led into the courtroom in shackles in front of the jury.

Assistant District Attorney Michael P. Toomey told ju-

rors that Jamison's witnesses were "prison buddies" and that they wouldn't want to see Jamison in trouble.

Consider the testimony of law enforcement officials and a state police investigator, Toomey said, and jurors did in nearly three hours of deliberation.

"I am happy with the outcome," Jamison said. "I knew I had to fight for myself."

Jamison had a backup attorney, Northumberland County public defender John Broda, who sat directly behind Jamison in case he stumbled.

"He is very well-spoken," Broda said after the verdict. "He presented his case well and he did a fantastic job."

After jurors read their decision, President Judge Robert Sacavage released them from duty and told them they were free to talk to anyone about the case should they choose.

## 'You did such a great job'

Several jurors flocked to Jamison.

"You would be an amazing attorney," a juror told Jamison. "You did such a great job proving your case."

Jamison has been in prison since he was 15, he told the jury during his closing arguments.

"I was a juvenile when I made my mistake," he said. "I want to be with my family and my friends and I just want to go home."

Toomey pointed out that Jamison failed to tell the jury why he was in prison in the first place.

"He didn't tell you what he did," Toomey said. "He failed to mention he was in a high-speed pursuit chase with police, and he ran several stop signs and T-boned another vehicle and a person died."

"This case before you is a clear assault on guards and all of the allegations he has made about being set up and targeted is all malarkey."

Toomey made references to things like a "ring of truth" and a "dull thud" about testimony by the three inmates.

"You heard from correction officers and police," he said.

"These are people who have pensions and jobs and why would they want to jeopardize that by lying about anything? Then you have three inmates who have lied before, under oath when asked about this incident. It sounds like a dull thud."

The "dull thud" became a loud one after the jury read the verdict.

Jamison's relatives left the courthouse and began to blow their car horns and flash their headlights in downtown Sunbury after the verdict.

"I love my son," Jamison's father said. "He did a great job and we believed in him."

## Prosecutor disappointed

Toomey said he was disappointed in the outcome of the trial.

"The jury made the decision," he said. "I put everything we had forward and they made their decision."

He said Jamison faces an additional one to seven years in prison for aggravated assault.

On Wednesday, Dave Sprout, a paralegal with the Lewisburg Prison Project, said: "Sometimes it is just assumed that prison guards are telling the truth and inmates are lying. This is a clear case that the jury didn't see it that way and I commend them for being objective and not showing prejudice."

Attempts to contact Jamison at Northumberland County Prison on Wednesday were denied.

"There are some cases we let prisoners speak when I feel it is warranted," Warden Roy Johnson said. "This is not one of them."

## Attack allegations

Jamison contacted The Daily Item several months ago and said while he spent time in the county lockup, he allegedly witnessed attacks on inmates and that Northumberland County Prison guards purposely did not videotape the alleged events.

Jamison said he would testify on behalf of the inmates and weeks later, two \$2 million lawsuits were filed against the county for the alleged attacks.

One of the guards has since been fired and the inmate lawsuits are in federal court.

The Daily Item requested videotape in September but was denied access.

A spokesman at SCI-Coal Township declined to release the video surveillance and declined to comment.

The state Department of Corrections did not return a call seeking comment.

■ Email comments to [fscarcella@dailyitem.com](mailto:fscarcella@dailyitem.com).