

UPDATE - Jury acquits accused assaulter

Posted by [TBN Charles](#) On 08/05/2015

La Plata, MD - A Charles County Circuit Court jury returned a verdict of not guilty on all charges against Justin Lafrance Holton, 44 of Newburg, for the Dec. 25, 2013 attack that left James Darnell Barnes bloody and beaten at Prince George's Shock Trauma Unit.

During the trial, defense Attorney Joseph F. Vallario Jr., questioned the truthfulness of the state's star witness—who had to be subpoenaed to testify after failing to appear in previous proceedings—and said the case boiled down to who the jury believed.

"It came down to the credibility of the witness," Vallario said. "Six different people said this lady's a habitual liar. We lined up a lot of witnesses," he added.

Vallario said the jury was sent to render its verdict, but was already asking questions "by the time we got back from lunch.

"They asked if they could see a transcript of the testimony, and the judge said no," he stated. "Word came out they had reached a verdict, and then they asked to have the verdict returned. Then they came out and said not guilty."

The defense argued it was Iesha Jenkins' twin brothers who beat up on Barnes, who was inebriated and passed out at their sister's house.

"My client had no motive," Vallario said. "They were the ones who didn't want this drunk man sleeping with their sister."

He added there was one thing that floored him in this case, and that was the fact that Jenkins was not only subpoenaed to appear, but had to report to the court weekly before the trial.

"In 50 years of practicing law, I've never seen a case where you, as a witness, had to report to a judge," he said.

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