

Sacramento Kings forward acquitted of serious charges

Chris Webber was found guilty of traffic violations and a misdemeanor, but cleared of other charges

By Derrill Holly
The Associated Press

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. — Sacramento Kings forward Chris Webber was cleared of the most serious charges against him Wednesday but will have to pay \$560 in fines for a traffic stop that could have led to a jail sentence.

A Prince George's County circuit court jury acquitted Webber

of possession of marijuana, driving under the influence of the drug, resisting arrest and second-degree assault.

However, the nine-woman, three-man panel found the NBA star guilty of two traffic violations and a misdemeanor charge.

"I'm very relieved," Webber said outside the courthouse. "When you face charges of any type it's definitely tense. I'm so elated right now it really hasn't hit me. I can't even show my emotions."

Judge Hovey Johnson fined Webber \$30 for failure to display

a driver's license on demand and \$30 for failure to display a car registration on demand. Although the Maryland criminal code suggests a range of \$270 to \$330 in fines as appropriate for willful disobedience of a police officer's lawful request, Johnson assessed a \$500 fine on that charge.

"Everyone understands that when you are stopped by the police you're not to argue about whether you're right or wrong," said Jack Johnson, whose State's Attorney office prosecuted the case. Johnson said the fines help

send that message.

"I just told the judge that I apologize for any inconveniences. I never want to be in a courtroom again," Webber said.

In closing arguments, prosecutor Shaem Spencer told jurors that Webber, who formerly played for the Washington Wizards, did not respect a police officer's request during the incident.

"It escalated because this defendant would not obey, would not get out" of the car, he said.

The arrest was one of several off-court matters that prompted

the Wizards to trade Webber to the Kings in May. He was accused of sexual assault in April, but that charge was later dropped. He also paid a \$500 fine paid in August after marijuana was found in his carry-on bag at an airport in Puerto Rico. That incident costed Webber his endorsement contract with Fila. Officials at the company contend he violated the athletic-wear manufacturer's conduct clause.

"It is going to effect the way that I act from here on out," Webber said, noting he intends to be more cautious.

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