



Judge Ochoa

Paul Wellman

Jeschke Gets Probation

Sentenced; Facing Prosecution on Additional Charges

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by BEN PRESTON

Dressed in rumpled orange and blue County Jail garb and clad in hand and ankle cuffs, Peter Jeschke—the former Santa Barbara High School tennis coach convicted in May of several counts of having sex with and giving intoxicating substances to a minor—was sentenced on Monday by Santa Barbara Superior Court Judge Frank Ochoa. To the surprise of Joyce Dudley, senior deputy district attorney, who has been on the case since it began in December 2007, Ochoa elected to go against the probation officer's recommendation of prison time, and suspended the maximum sentence of seven years and eight months, instead placing Jeschke on probation for five years. "This is a difficult and troubling case. It's clear that Mr. Jeschke abused a position of power," said Ochoa, noting that what most swayed his decision was a statement submitted to the probation officer by the victim's mother, in which she essentially stated that the ruination of Jeschke's reputation and career as a professional tennis instructor was punishment enough. She had also expressed concern over the welfare of Jeschke's five-year-old son.



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LAST-DITCH EFFORT: Peter Jeschke was out on bail leading up to his trial but was remanded into custody when police traced a threatening Facebook message back to him that had been sent to witnesses on the eve of trial.

Jeschke, whose eyes seldom left the floor during the hearing, displayed no emotion as his sentence was read, although the many friends and family members who turned up seemed relieved. A handful of his detractors showed what appeared to be signs of disgust, with one woman hissing, "Unbelievable!" just after the pronouncement was made. Although it is unclear whether or not the statements she made prior to sentencing had any impact upon Ochoa's decision, defense attorney Lara Yeretsian implied in her commentary that due to the nature of his crimes, Jeschke would face sexual abuse if he were to go to state prison. "I felt that this judge did the right thing," she said. Yeretsian had also collected numerous letters of support from friends

and family members, submitting them to the probation officer responsible for making a sentencing recommendation, as well as ordering a Static-99 -a specific psychological examination to determine an inmate's risk of repeating sexual or violent crimes. The test results indicated that Jeschke is at extremely low risk of committing similar crimes in the future.



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Although he dodged prison time for now, the former high school tennis coach faces charges of witness intimidation and supplying drugs to minors.

Discussed at length during the sentencing hearing were the impacts Jeschke's actions allegedly had upon the victim, her family, and the Santa Barbara High School tennis team. "I felt that he was deserving of a prison sentence based upon his criminal behavior and the effect that it had not just upon his victim, but on the entire community," said Dudley. An emotional statement by one of the victim's friends-a former team member who had testified that Jeschke had given alcohol to her and other girls on the team-told of her feelings of betrayal that she said led to her detaching from friends and losing

interest in the sport. The victim's mother said that her daughter seldom agrees to talk about the incident, although she is currently seeing a therapist.

Jeschke is not yet out of the woods, though, as he still faces nine additional charges, including witness intimidation counts racked up when he talked a former high school tennis player into sending threatening messages to witnesses during the trial, the day before the girls were to testify. The added charges carry the possibility of 10 years in prison. "In my 27 years on the bench, I haven't ever had someone try to manipulate the process as Mr. Jeschke did," said Ochoa. It will be a while, however, before a decision is made-a preliminary hearing for the new charges is scheduled to be heard by Judge George Eskin on December 9-but Jeschke, who has already served more than 300 days in County Jail, may be eligible for release fairly soon.

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This story has been amended for accuracy since its initial publication: Two charges of supplying drugs to the girl he had sex with, which resulted in a mistrial, were in fact not filed again with