

Vikings Fan Acquitted After Video Shows Officers Attacking Him

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MINNEAPOLIS (WCCO) — A football fan feels vindicated after a jury found him not guilty of trying to disarm a police officer while being detained at a Minnesota Vikings game last year.

Anastacio Lopez was ejected from the game for fighting in the stands on Dec. 1, 2016.

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He was in the process of being taken to a holding center inside U.S. Bank Stadium by Minneapolis police officers when they took him down, kned and punched him. They then used an electroshock weapon on him.



Body Camera footage of an officer holding a taser that was shot into Anastacio Lopez (credit: CBS)

Lopez received a felony charge for attempting to disarm a peace officer. A jury acquitted him of the charge Wednesday.

Lopez says his memory of that night is hazy; not because he was drunk, but because he was hit in the head by officers several times.

He vehemently denies ever reaching for the officer's weapon and he said the jury's decision, aided by the surveillance video, proved he was right.

Lopez, a Vikings fan, was visiting from Texas that night.

In the surveillance footage, you can see Minneapolis Police Officers Russell Cragin and Anthony Rodin leading Lopez down a hallway inside the stadium.

It appears Lopez turns towards the officers when suddenly he is taken to the ground with force. A struggle ensues in which he is punched, kneed and shocked.

"When I saw the videos I couldn't believe what had happened," Lopez said. "I knew I had bruises, I know I had burn marks all over my hands."



Minneapolis police officers hold down Anastacio Lopez (credit: CBS)

The body cameras for the officers were not turned on during the incident, but were turned on shortly after it happened.

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In the footage, you can hear the officers say that Lopez tried to start a fight with them, then reach for their belt and weapons while they were on the ground.

“I’m a person that wouldn’t do something like that,” Lopez said. “I just knew I wouldn’t act that way.”

In the footage, you can hear an officer say to Lopez after the incident, “The last thing I ever wanted to do in this game was have to fight with somebody though man, honestly.”

Lopez then replies: “I didn’t think I was fighting with anybody, but OK.”

Despite the officers’ claims, Lopez’s lawyer Michael Nadimi said the surveillance video showing the moments that led up to the struggle was the key piece of evidence that proved his client didn’t start a fight with officers, nor reach for a weapon.

“All we had to go on was what [the officers] said, and as you can tell now by the verdict, it’s not always the case,” Lopez said.



Anastacio Lopez (credit: CBS)

He filed a lawsuit several months ago against five police officers, as well as former Chief Janeé Harteau, the security company at U.S. Bank Stadium, the Vikings and more.

The civil suit alleges the officers used excessive force, as well as assaulted and battered Lopez.

His lawyer feels the verdict will only help their case, because he said the defendants were using the criminal charge against Lopez as part of their defense.

Lopez is claiming \$75,000 in damages.

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Minneapolis Police Department released this statement about the case:

“Internal Affairs reviews all use of force reports following an incident. The outcome of a criminal case does not affect if MPD opens an internal affairs case.”

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