

Man used his wolf hybrid to attack couple

Michael Lee Mullins gets 5-plus years in prison

By [Anita Burke](#)

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A homeless man is headed to prison after a jury found him guilty of using his wolf-husky hybrid to attack a couple walking their dog on the Bear Creek Greenway in December.

Michael Lee Mullins, 40, was convicted of second- and third-degree assault Wednesday in Jackson County Circuit Court and sentenced to five years and 10 months in prison, Jackson County Senior Deputy District Attorney Karen Loomis said. Samuel Robert Bennett, 52, also was found guilty of third-degree assault for participating in the attack Dec. 14.

Mullins and Bennett came out of the OK Market at 1202 N. Riverside Ave. after buying beer at about 1:30 p.m. on that Sunday afternoon and spotted a 59-year-old Medford man and his wife walking a 12-year-old German shepherd mix on the Greenway, Loomis said.

The couple testified that the two men and Mullins' large yellow dog stormed toward them, Loomis said. The man said he could tell trouble was headed his way and he called to the men to control their dog.

The dog attacked the older leashed dog, and the woman holding the leash fell backward. Her husband stepped in between her and the men and dogs, but testified that Mullins urged the dog to attack. Mullins' dog bit the man twice while he shouted for them to control the animal, Loomis said.

The man pulled out brass knuckles he carried for protection from dogs running loose on the trail. Mullins taunted him, saying "hit me, hit me," so the man did, dropping Mullins to the ground, Loomis said.

The couple turned to leave the area as the woman called police, but Mullins sprang up, swinging and kicking at the man. Bennett joined in, and the two men and the dog knocked the victim to the ground. Bennett held him while Mullins kicked and punched him.

A Medford police officer arrived within minutes and drew his gun and demanded the beating stop, Loomis said. Mullins ran and jumped in Bear Creek in an attempt to escape but was caught and shot with a stun gun when he continued to fight police. His dog also chased an officer briefly before fleeing.

Mullins initially told police that he mistook the victim for a man he had quarreled with at a homeless camp in the past, and sicced his dog on the couple in revenge, Loomis said. He later recanted that, admitting he didn't know them.

He then said his dog, although normally well-trained, had pulled him toward them and attacked their pet, then attacked the man after he hit Mullins.

"I think the jury saw through that," Loomis said.

She said second-degree assault convictions for using a dog as a weapon are uncommon. Second-degree assault is a Measure 11 crime that carries a mandatory minimum penalty.

Mullins also was sentenced to 15 months in prison for the third-degree assault charge linked with hitting and kicking the victim, but that sentence will be served concurrently. He must pay the victim's medical bills as restitution.

Bennett is set to be sentenced Friday at 11 a.m. Loomis said she is recommending an 18-month sentence for him based on sentencing guidelines and his past criminal record.

The dog involved in the attack escaped police who searched transient camps for it for several days, Loomis said. Unbeknownst to authorities who learned the details later, another homeless man caught the animal and took it to the Jackson County Animal Shelter. Officials there kept it in quarantine for the period required for all strays, then evaluated it for possible adoption and ultimately euthanized it as too aggressive, Loomis said.

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