

Skater pleads to lesser charges

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A former Olympic skater pleaded no contest Monday to two misdemeanors after prosecutors dropped a felony charge against him, in a case his lawyer said could lead to his redemption.

Christopher Bowman pleaded no contest in Rochester Hills district court to possessing a gun while intoxicated as well as assault and battery. His Southfield-based attorney, Michael Komorn, said Bowman has used this incident to realize the significance of a bipolar condition that was recently diagnosed and to get the necessary treatment.

"He's been able to get out of the rut he was in," said Komorn. "Now he's in a much better place."

Prosecutors dismissed the top count of felonious assault against Bowman after the key witness changed her story with a letter stating what happened at Bowman's Lake Orion apartment on Oct. 27.

An alternate count of aiming a firearm with malice was also dismissed.

Considering the revised statement of facts, "we are unable to sustain the burden of proof," Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor Timothy McDonald told Judge Nancy Tolwin Carniak.

Initially, police believed that Bowman had pointed a handgun at April Freeman, who said she is his friend and business partner.

Freeman, who was present Monday, said that is not what occurred. "Basically, I was impaired when I gave the first statement," she said outside of the courtroom, saying prescription painkillers taken after a medical procedure affected her that night.

She said she does not even remember writing out the original statement to Lake Orion police.

"He was holding a gun, but he wasn't holding it in a threatening manner," she said. "I don't feel any criminal activity had taken place."

Her letter from Nov. 9 will be used with breath-test results as the basis of facts in the case. A no-contest plea is not an admission of guilt, but is treated as such for sentencing. The penalty could range from probation to 93 days in jail.

Komorn said Bowman, who declined to speak until after his Jan. 17 sentencing, wants to use this dark moment to move forward, improve himself and help others. "There's a lot of other people in this world with similar issues," Komorn said. "He can help other people."

He indicated Bowman, 37, also wants to get back into the skating industry. "He's a world-class athlete who's seen it all," Komorn said. "He has a tremendous amount to offer."

Carniak said mental health and substance abuse treatment must be part of the sentence, something both Komorn and the prosecutor wanted.

"He will overcome all the obstacles ahead of him," Komorn said.