

Power Team Founder John Jacobs Faces Assault Charge in Dallas

The divorced evangelist blames former members of his famous strength team for 'sabotaging' his ministry

Dallas-based evangelist John Jacobs is 6 feet 3 inches tall, weighs more than 300 pounds and measures 5 feet around his chest. He once placed second in the nation in weight lifting, can snap two pairs of handcuffs and can curl 350 pounds.

But Jacobs' powerful body has landed him in legal trouble. He now faces a misdemeanor assault and battery charge for attacking Jeff Audas, an ex-employee of the Power Team who now works for Team Impact, a ministry made up of 24 of Jacobs' former colleagues.

Documents on file at the Dallas County Courthouse say that on May 19, 2000, Jacobs grabbed Audas by the shoulders and slammed him into a wall. The records also state that other employees tried to restrain Jacobs, "but he was able to grab [Audas] by the right shoulder and shove him into the wall one more time."

Jacobs' attorney, Joe Shearin, denies that his client assaulted Audas. Shearin called Audas "a somewhat out-of-control malcontent whose accusations are false." At press time a date had not been set for a court hearing.

More than a dozen former Power Team members left Jacobs' ministry after he divorced his wife of 16 years, Ruthanne, in May 2000.

In an interview with Charisma, Jacobs, who is 41, blasted former employees such as Audas and others who left to form Team Impact, which also blends evangelism and feats of strength to reach young audiences. Jacobs called his former associates "troublemakers, disloyal, antagonizers and womanizers." He also said he believes these individuals were "pruned" from his ministry "so we could go to the next level."

But not all of Jacobs' supporters are critical of his former ministry associates. Larry Jones, founder and president of the Oklahoma-based Feed the Children ministry, served at one time on a three-member advisory team that was helping Jacobs during his divorce proceedings. But today Jones is a member of Team Impact's board of advisers.

Jones said Team Impact members were "good guys," adding that Audas' No. 1 priority is his wife and his family. "I never saw any evidence of flirtation. [Audas] is a hard worker, definitely not an antagonizer," Jones said.

Jacobs blames Team Impact members for his mass staff exodus and what he calls their attempts to "sabotage" his ministry. He also blames them for contributing to his organization's financial woes, claiming that Team Impact members spread rumors that the Power Team no longer exists.

"[As a result] we lost 25 crusades and between \$1 million to \$1.5 million dollars [in potential income]," Jacobs said. "They admitted to it and said, 'Yes, we've done this, but

we're going to stop.'"

But Audas denies ever calling churches where Jacobs was scheduled to perform. "At no time did we ever do that. We never would establish a ministry of thievery based upon someone else's achievements," Audas said.

Some ministers rushed to the defense of Audas and Team Impact. Pastor Shane Womack of Knott Avenue Christian Church in Anaheim, Calif., said his church initiated all contact with Team Impact.

Michael Reeves, pastor of Teaver Road Baptist Church in LaGrange, Ga., said he never heard Team Impact members criticize or slander the Power Team or John Jacobs' ministry. "There were no accusations or misleading rumors spoken," he added.

The Power Team's financial woes show no signs of improving. In a layoff announcement dated April 17 and given to a Power Team employee, Jacobs wrote that an additional \$20,000 to \$30,000 a month is needed to fulfill financial obligations.

Jacobs also claims that his total annual income, which is listed at \$500,000 in a document on file at the Dallas County Courthouse, is incorrect. He said he rushed to fill out court-ordered documents relating to the assault and battery charge, and in his hurry he reported the wrong numbers. His actual income, he said, is about \$331,000, which includes royalties from his books and tapes, as well as mineral rights in Oklahoma and an inheritance.

Jacobs has since remarried, and the three-person advisory

council that provided pastoral oversight during his divorce proceedings has since resigned. It consisted of Larry Jones, pastor Lawrence Kennedy of The North Church in Dallas, and pastor Bill Purvis of Cascade Hills Baptist Church in Columbus, Ga.

“The three-person advisory council assembled by John Jacobs is no longer involved in his restoration,” the three ministers said in a joint statement. “Each of us resigned when we could no longer be effective in this assignment. We are all deeply sympathetic with the Power Team and the effects of this divorce. This is another wake-up call to all Christian leaders who are being greatly blessed and used by God.”

Despite his troubles, Jacobs remains upbeat about his ministry and says many people have come to Christ at his recent meetings. About 135 crusade events have been scheduled for the Power Team this year.