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No Charges for Tasered Fla. Student

By TRAVIS REED
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GAINESVILLE, Fla. — The University of Florida student stunned by a police Taser and arrested after his fervent, videotaped outburst at an event with Sen. John Kerry won't go to court if he stays out of trouble during 18 months of probation, prosecutors said Tuesday.

Andrew Meyer's shout of "Don't Tase me, bro!" was ignored by campus police but helped video clips of the 21-year-old being dragged from a microphone become an Internet sensation.

The telecommunications major wrote apologies to the Gainesville school; its president, Bernie Machen; and the campus police department, defense attorney Robert Griscti said. Meyer recently decided to take the semester off because of the publicity, but he will return in January, Griscti said.

"I stepped out of line at the Kerry forum," Meyer wrote. "I violated the rules of the forum and was disruptive. I now realize that in order to be heard, one must act within the appropriate time, place and manner."

State Attorney William Cervone said Meyer agreed to conduct himself "in a fashion that demonstrates his ability to behave appropriately and without violating the law" during 18 months of probation. If not, Cervone said, Meyer will be charged with resisting an officer without violence and interfering with a school function.

University police had recommended he be charged with resisting arrest with violence, a felony.

As a campus question-and-answer session with Kerry was ending Sept. 17, Meyer loudly demanded a chance to question the former Democratic presidential candidate. Officers approached but backed off when Kerry said he would answer Meyer's questions.

The student launched into a diatribe about why Kerry didn't challenge his 2004 loss to President Bush, why the president hasn't been impeached and whether he and Bush were members of the secret society Skull and Bones at Yale University. Event organizers cut Meyer's microphone when he said former President Clinton was impeached for oral sex.

Police grabbed Meyer to escort him out, but he flailed and slipped from their grasp. He allegedly grabbed an auditorium seat at one point so he couldn't be moved.

Officers had him on the ground, but Meyer kept struggling. He was zapped with the Taser just after his "Don't Tase me, bro" plea.

The police involved returned to work last week after the Florida Department of Law Enforcement determined it was an appropriate use of force.

Police said Meyer's tone changed instantly when he stepped into the patrol car. He was recorded telling the officers they didn't do anything wrong, according to the FDLE report, and sounded pleased about the arrest in a jailhouse phone call.

Meyer, however, denied suggestions that he intended to cause a scene.

"I'm so sorry that I lost my control in that auditorium," he wrote. "I went there to ask an important question. The question of voter disenfranchisement in America cuts to the heart of our democracy, and my failure to act calmly resulted in this important town forum ending without the discourse intended. For that, I am truly sorry."

Griscti said he and his client believe use of the Taser was unnecessary.

"It actually leaves a burn mark, and it did, and it hurts," Griscti said, applauding the school's decision to investigate Tasers on campus with a student and faculty committee.

The lawyer added that Meyer remains surprised by the continued attention.

"We have not made a statement in the media for six weeks, with the exception of last week," Griscti said, referencing a brief news release in response to the FDLE report. "We have not been feeding this; it's got a life of its own."


Meyer, who has a Florida Bright Futures Scholarship and no prior arrest record, promised officials that he learned from the incident.

"I am a far more reasoned individual than I was a short while ago, and the reasoned response of the university has helped me a great deal," Meyer wrote.

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