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## Judge sets Aug. 1 trial for Pacers on brawl charges

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ROCHESTER HILLS, Mich. (AP) — The trials for the five Indiana players involved in the November brawl at the Pacers-Pistons game will begin Aug. 1, starting with [Ron Artest](#).

The players, along with four other defendants in the melee, appeared in a suburban Detroit courtroom briefly Friday to schedule the trials. All of them are charged with misdemeanor assault and battery.

Judge Lisa Asadoorian of the 52nd District Court in Rochester Hills scheduled seven separate trials for this summer, beginning with the fans in July.

Asadoorian granted a request by William Paulson and John Ackerman, two Pistons fans involved in the brawl at The Palace of Auburn Hills, to be tried first. She instructed them to appear for trial July 11.

John Green, the fan who prosecutors say sparked the brawl by lobbing a drink that struck Artest, is to be tried along with David Wallace, brother of Pistons center [Ben Wallace](#), on July 15.

Asadoorian earlier granted the players' motion for separate trials. After Artest, [Anthony Johnson](#), [David Harrison](#), [Jermaine O'Neal](#) and [Stephen Jackson](#) are scheduled to be tried in that order.

Green and Wallace did not file a motion for separate trials by the deadline, but Green's lawyer Shawn Smith said they intended to do so now.

Neil Rockind, a lawyer for Paulson and Ackerman, said he and his co-counsel intended to call the five Pacers as witnesses in the first trial. Even if they don't say anything, Rockind said their presence in the courtroom would help the jury understand what the brawl looked like to the fans who got involved.

"You see them in court, and they are huge men. They're giants," Rockind said. "We have giants who are angry,

who are physically fit and they're coming after fans in the stands."

At Friday's hearing, all the defendants were brought in and out of the courtroom via a separate entrance from spectators and media.

In a lighthearted moment during the otherwise businesslike hearing, Asadoorian complimented Johnson on a 3-point shot at the end of Wednesday's game against the Bulls. The Pacers beat Chicago 85-83 and Johnson scored 20 points, including the go-ahead basket and a clinching 3-pointer in the final minute.

The Nov. 19 brawl started after [Ben Wallace](#) shoved Artest following a hard foul. After they were separated, Artest was doused with the beverage, rushed into the stands and began beating a man he thought had thrown the drink. Some of his teammates joined him in the stands and also clashed with fans on the court.

A fan charged with throwing a chair pleaded no contest last month and is expected to be sentenced next month. Three other fans were sentenced to probation for walking on a court or throwing objects.

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