CALIFORNIA

Ex-Stanford swimmer freed after 3 months

Protests continue over sentencing in sexual assault case.

By Paul Elias Associated Press

SAN JOSE, CALIF. — Brock Turner, whose six-month sentence for sexually assaulting an unconscious woman at Stanford University sparked a national outcry, was released from jail Friday after serving half his six-month sentence.

The onetime Olympic hopeful swimmer walked out of the Santa Clara County jail shortly after 6 a.m. PDT. Turner, who kept his head down and didn’t acknowledge the media, was carrying a large packet of hate mail sent to him during his incarceration.

A local television station followed the rented SUV that picked him up to a nearby hotel where he checked in with his parents, with whom he plans to live.
after returning to his native Ohio. The 21-year-old must register as a sex offender for life and faces three years of supervised probation.

Turner’s case exploded into the spotlight as a poignant statement from the victim swept through social media and critics decried the sentence as too lenient. The outcry prompted California lawmakers to pass a tougher sexual assault law and led to an effort to remove the judge from the bench.

In her statement the victim said it wasn’t fair Turner’s loss of his athletic career had been considered when he was sentenced.

“How fast Brock swims does not lessen the severity of what happened to me, and should not lessen the severity of his punishment,” the victim said. “The fact that Brock was an athlete at a private university should not be seen as an entitlement to leniency, but as an opportunity to send a message that sexual assault is against the law regardless of social class.”

Santa Clara County Sheriff Laurie Smith said Turner received threats in jail in addition to the packet of hate mail given to him as he left. She said she believed Turner’s sentence was too light and urged Gov. Jerry Brown to sign a bill the Assembly passed 66-0 Monday that would require mandatory prison sentences for sexual assault convictions.

Turner was convicted of assaulting the woman after a bout of heavy drinking at a fraternity party in January 2015. The victim had passed out and Turner was on top of her when two graduate students confronted him. They chased and tackled him as he tried to flee, holding him until police arrived.

Turner plans to appeal.

A few protesters jeered him as he left the jail and more began gathering in front of the nearby courthouse to advocate for the judge’s ouster.

“He sentence was upsetting and unsettling,” said Christy Heiskala, who flew from San Diego to attend the protest.

Santa Clara County Judge Aaron Persky cited Turner’s youth, clean criminal record and other considerations when he sentenced Turner, following the probation department’s recommendation of a “moderate” jail sentence.
Amid the backlash and a push for a recall, Persky voluntarily removed himself from hearing criminal cases, starting next week.

Recall campaign leaders, however, are calling for him to resign.

“We need judges who understand sexual assault and violence against women,” said Stanford law professor Michele Dauber, a friend of Turner’s victim and the chair of the recall campaign. “Judge Persky does not.”

In Ohio, Greene County Sheriff Gene Fischer said Turner will have five days to register with his office in Xenia, 15 miles east of Dayton. He will have to report to a probation officer for three years and must avoid alcohol and drugs.

Fischer said his department will notify Turner’s neighbors that a convicted sex offender is living nearby. Turner will be required to register every three months in person at the sheriff’s office, reaffirming that he is still living with his parents, the sheriff said.

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