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Domestic abuse charge for Mets star Jeurys Familia

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STAFF WRITERS | THE RECORD

Jeurys Familia, the popular Mets relief pitcher who last month was featured in an anti-domestic-violence ad campaign, was charged in connection with an alleged domestic assault in a Fort Lee apartment, according to a complaint filed in court and obtained by The Record on Tuesday.

Borough police said in the complaint that Familia caused “bodily injury to another” and that they observed a scratch on the chest and a bruise on the right cheek of the victim, whose name was redacted in the court papers filed in Fort Lee Municipal Court.

“The matter was brought to our attention and we are monitoring the situation,” the Mets said in a brief statement Tuesday. Major League Baseball issued a similar statement about an hour later, saying league officials “are aware and are investigating the facts.”

Familia, 27, who is identified in the complaint as Jeurys F. Mojica, was charged with simple assault, a disorderly persons offense, according to the complaint. A Facebook page that appears to belong to Familia uses the name Jeurys Familia Mojica to identify him. The date of birth on the complaint matches the date of birth given for Familia on the Mets’ website.

The allegations come amid increased scrutiny of domestic violence charges against sports celebrities, and criticism of the way some cases have been handled by the National Football League. Major League Baseball, based on the way it has handled other recent allegations of domestic abuse, could discipline Familia even if the charges against him are dropped.

The complaint filed in Fort Lee, which says the incident took place on Monday, referenced observations by police officers of “visible injuries” but did not include statements by the alleged victim or anyone else about what caused those injuries.

Fort Lee Police Chief Keith Bendul had declined to provide details on Monday when he was asked about the incident, saying only that police officers had responded to an apartment on Park Avenue at 2:22 a.m. Monday after being called about “a dispute.” He did not identify the parties involved or specify whether charges had been filed.

The complaint had not been filed with the judiciary by the time the court closed on Monday but was available Tuesday. Police officers said in the complaint that they found probable cause “to believe that domestic violence had occurred.” Familia, who made \$4.1 million this past season, was released after posting bail, which was set at \$1,500 with an option to post 10 percent of that amount, according to court records. He agreed not to have any contact with the alleged victim as a condition of his release.

Familia did not immediately respond to a message sent by email. The agency that represents him, Aces Inc., also did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment. One of the agency’s owners, Seth Levinson, did not answer a call to his cellphone on Tuesday night. A message could not be left for him because his voicemail box was full.

The Mets pitcher was living with his wife, Bianca, and their 1-year-old son, Jeurys Jr., in a Fort Lee apartment, according to previously published reports. He was the Mets’ top relief pitcher and a member of the National League All-Star team this year, and took part in an ad campaign that began last month featuring local professional sports celebrities condemning domestic violence.



Jeurys Familia

AP FILE PHOTO

A native of the Dominican Republic, Familia spoke in Spanish on the video, saying he was a fan of baseball and of the Mets, and adding, "I am not a fan of domestic violence."

The campaign is sponsored by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence and includes videos by Yankees manager Joe Girardi, New York Liberty center Kiah Stokes and retired athletes John Starks of the Knicks and Rod Gilbert of the Rangers. New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito helped to coordinate the campaign.

The coalition said in a statement on Tuesday that it was "surprised" by the allegations against Familia. Ruth M. Glenn, the coalition's executive director, urged the Mets "to remain committed in their stance against domestic violence."

Mark-Viverito issued a statement on Tuesday saying she was "deeply disturbed by the allegations" against Familia and was calling on Major League Baseball to "launch an immediate and thorough investigation." She said the Familia video, which is posted online as part of the anti-domestic-violence campaign called #NotAFan, would be removed. She also referred to former Giants placekicker Josh Brown, who was cut from the team last month after it became public that he admitted to abusing his wife.

"The problem is rampant," Mark-Viverito said. "The solution is to confront it."

The NFL was criticized this year when Brown initially was suspended for just one game after being arrested on domestic violence charges. The NFL promised to reform the way it handles domestic violence cases two years ago after initially suspending running back Ray Rice for just two games before handing out an indefinite suspension.

Familia was the star of the Mets relief pitching staff and was the team's closer, typically inserted at the end of games to maintain slim leads. He famously pitched on the day his son was born in 2015, helping the Mets to hold a lead against the visiting Atlanta Braves at Citi Field.

While he was selected to be on the National League All-Star roster this year, he did not pitch in the All-Star Game. Last month, he gave up a three-run home run to Conor Gillaspie in the ninth inning to take the loss in a 3-0 wild-card game against the San Francisco Giants.

If Familia is not convicted, he can still face discipline from Major League Baseball in 2017. Mets infielder Jose Reyes received a 51-game suspension to start the 2016 season after he was arrested and charged with assaulting his wife in Maui in October 2015, even though charges eventually were dropped. Reyes was a member of the Colorado Rockies at the time the suspension was levied. The Rockies released him upon his reinstatement and he signed with the Mets in June.

Former Yankee and current Chicago Cubs closer Aroldis Chapman was assessed a 30-game suspension after police were summoned to his Davie, Fla., home for an alleged incident involving Chapman and his pregnant girlfriend. Chapman was not arrested or charged in the incident, but a police report alleged that he struck and choked his girlfriend at a family birthday party. Police allege Chapman also fired eight gunshots in his garage after the sequence. Cristina Barnea, Chapman's girlfriend, eventually told police she did not wish to have Chapman prosecuted.

Chapman was traded from the Cincinnati Reds to the Yankees after the incident, and joined the Cubs in a July trade.

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