

***By Tina Kitt***

***The Wauneta Breeze***

Eric Top of Wauneta was sentenced to four to eight years in the Nebraska State Penitentiary last week after the 32-year-old was convicted of first degree assault earlier this spring in district court.

A district court jury found Top guilty in late March of the May 2007 assault of Steve Fortkamp of Wauneta.

On May 4, 2007, Fortkamp was severely injured and spent weeks in critical condition in a Kearney hospital after he was beaten and kicked by Top.

According to Chase County Attorney Arlan Wine of Wauneta, Top must serve 24 months—half of the sentence minimum—before being considered for parole.

During Top's May 6 sentencing, his attorney, Joel Burke of Imperial, asked that Top remain free on bond pending appeal.

District Judge David Urbom denied that request and Top was immediately ordered into custody. He was transported to the state penitentiary in Lincoln Thursday morning. Wine said Top has 30 days to file an appeal.

Wine noted that the court waived payment of court costs after determining they were uncollectable.

While no restitution was provided for in last week's court ruling, an earlier civil suit was filed by Fortkamp against Top seeking damages and financial compensation to cover medical expenses and lost income, as well as a judgment for pain and suffering, explained Wine.