U.S. Department of Justice

Joseph Nocella, Jr.
United States Attorney
Eastern District of New York

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PRESS RELEASE

CURRENT AND FORMER NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION PLAYERS AND FOUR OTHER INDIVIDUALS CHARGED IN WIDESPREAD SPORTS BETTING AND MONEY LAUNDERING CONSPIRACY

Defendants Allegedly Used Non-Public Injury and Lineup Information to Place Fraudulent Wagers Worth Hundreds of Thousands of Dollars

Earlier today, at the federal courthouse in Brooklyn, an indictment was unsealed charging six defendants — Eric Earnest, also known as "Spook," Marves Fairley, also known as "Vez," "Vezino," and "Vezino Locks", Shane Hennen, also known as "Sugar," Damon Jones, also known as "D Jones," and "Dee Jones," Deniro Laster, also known as "Niro," "Payso," and "Peso," and Terry Rozier, also known as "Scary Terry" and "Chum" — with wire fraud conspiracy and money laundering conspiracy for their alleged roles in a scheme to use inside information from National Basketball Association (NBA) players and coaches to profit from illegal betting activity.

The defendants, who are located across the country, will be arraigned at a future date in the Eastern District of New York.

Joseph Nocella Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, Kash Patel, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); Christopher G. Raia, Assistant Director in Charge, FBI, New York Field Office; and Jessica S. Tisch, Commissioner, New York City Police Department (NYPD), announced the charges.

"As alleged, the defendants turned professional basketball into a criminal betting operation, using private locker room and medical information to enrich themselves and cheat legitimate sportsbooks," stated United States Attorney Nocella. "This was a sophisticated conspiracy involving athletes, coaches, and intermediaries who exploited confidential information for profit. Insider betting schemes erode the integrity of American sports, and this Office will continue in its strong tradition of holding accountable anyone who seeks to corrupt sports through illegal means."

Mr. Nocella thanked the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania and the FBI's Philadelphia Field Office for their invaluable assistance in the investigation.

"Today the FBI arrested six people, including current and former NBA players, for their alleged role in illegal sports betting and money laundering conspiracy – the result of a sweeping investigation conducted by outstanding FBI professionals and partners. Using private information and positions of power to rig sports gambling outcomes is not only illegal, but destroys the integrity of the game and will never be tolerated. We will continue following the money to ensure gambling operations of all kinds stay within the law and bring to justice those who take advantage of innocent victims," stated FBI Director Patel.

"Former and current NBA players and coaches, including Terry Rozier, Damon Jones and additional co-conspirators, allegedly informed the defendants and others of confidential information relating to upcoming NBA games and player performances, such as pre-release medical information and a player's intention to alter their upcoming game performance, which favored certain bettors within their inner social circle," stated FBI Assistant Director in Charge Raia. "This alleged collusion resulted in the defendants secretly pocketing their lavish winnings and corrupting NBA games. The FBI will never turn a blind eye to any insider betting scheme within sporting industries – regardless of title or professional affiliation – to protect its integrity and afford all participants a fair chance to win big.

"Rigging a professional basketball game for personal profit is as immoral as it is illegal," stated NYPD Commissioner Tisch. "This investigation exposed a gambling ring built around the NBA, where players and associates allegedly used inside information and even faked injuries to fraudulently manipulate bets on games. The fact that some players altered their performance or took themselves out of games to ensure these bets paid out is an offense to every player and fan. Thanks to the incredible work of the NYPD detectives and our partners at the FBI and the U.S. Attorney's Office, this illegal sports betting operation has been benched for good."

As set forth in the indictment, between December 2022 and March 2024, the defendants and their associates obtained and misused non-public information about upcoming NBA games to place fraudulent sports wagers for profit and then laundered the proceeds.

The conspirators allegedly obtained insider information from several NBA players and coaches, including Rozier and Jones, and distributed that information through a network of bettors. These bettors placed wagers through online sportsbooks and retail betting outlets, falsely representing that their wagers complied with the betting companies' rules—which included, as relevant here, not betting on non-public information or using straw bettors—while concealing that their wagers were based on confidential team information. Some of the co-conspirators' activities alleged in the indictment are described below:

March 23, 2023 – Charlotte Hornets Game

As alleged, Rozier, then an active player for the Hornets, tipped off longtime friend Laster that Rozier planned to leave the game early due to a purported injury. Rozier provided this information to Laster for the purpose of enabling Laster to place wagers based on this information. Laster, Fairley, and Hennen, among others, used that confidential information to place and direct more than $200,000 in wagers predicting Rozier's "under" statistics (i.e., that Rozier would underperform). Rozier exited the game after nine minutes, and many of the bets paid off, generating tens of thousands of dollars in profits. Laster collected the cash and drove through the night to Rozier's house, where together they counted the profits together.

March 24, 2023 – Portland Trail Blazers Game

As alleged, Earnest received, and then passed on, insider information from a longtime friend, an NBA coach at the time, that several of the Blazers' top players would sit out a game against the Chicago Bulls. Before that information became public, Fairley and his associates wagered over $100,000 against the Blazers. When the lineup change was later confirmed, betting lines shifted dramatically and the group's early bets yielded major winnings.

April 6, 2023 – Orlando Magic Game

As alleged, Fairley profited from a tip obtained through an inside connection to a then Orlando Magic player. A co-conspirator leveraged a relationship with the Magic player to learn that several of the team's top players would sit out a game against the Cleveland Cavaliers—information that had not yet been made public. The co-conspirator relayed the tip to Fairley, who placed an approximately $11,000 bet that the Cavaliers would outperform the point spread. When the lineup change was later confirmed and the Cavaliers went on to beat the Magic by 24 points, Fairley and the co-conspirator pocketed the winnings.

February 9, 2023 and January 15, 2024 – Los Angeles Lakers Games

As alleged, former NBA player and coach Jones shared and sold insider information on numerous occasions about undisclosed information relating to NBA games, such as lineup decisions and pre-release medical information, to his co-conspirators, who then placed significant wagers based on the tips. For example, on February 9, 2023 and January 15, 2024, respectively, Jones provided insider information to co-conspirators about pre-release medical information concerning star players on the Los Angeles Lakers for the purpose of enabling the co-conspirators to place wagers based on this information.

January 26, 2024 and March 20, 2024 – Toronto Raptors Games

As alleged, Jontay Porter, who was then an NBA player with the Toronto Raptors, informed co-conspirator Long Phi Pham and others that he would prematurely exit the games he was scheduled to play on January 26, 2024 and March 20, 2024, due to purported injuries. Porter agreed to exit the games early so that Pham and others could place bets on this non-public information. Pham, in turn, provided this information to Hennen, who also provided the information to Fairley. Subsequently, Hennen placed bets on Porter's unders, or underperformance, in connection with the games through a network of straw bettors. When Porter exited both games early, numerous of the fraudulent wagers were successful.

Porter and Pham, among others, have previously pleaded guilty in connection with their participation in the scheme related to these two games.

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The charges in the indictment are allegations and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. If convicted, each defendant faces a maximum sentence of 20 years' imprisonment on the wire fraud conspiracy count and 20 years' imprisonment on the money laundering conspiracy count.

The government's case is being handled by the Office's Business and Securities Fraud Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Benjamin Weintraub, David Berman and Kaitlin Farrell are in charge of the prosecution, with assistance from Paralegal Specialists Liam McNett and Timothy Migliaro.

The Defendants:

ERIC EARNEST (also known as "Spook")
Age: 35
Missouri

MARVES FAIRLEY (also known as "Vez," "Vezino," and "Vezino Locks")
Age: 33
Mississippi

SHANE HENNEN (also known as "Sugar")
Age: 31
Nevada

DAMON JONES (also known as "D Jones" and "Dee Jones")
Age: 49
California

DENIRO LASTER (also known as "Niro," "Payso," and "Peso")
Age: 30
Ohio

TERRY ROZIER (also known as "Scary Terry" and "Chum")
Age: 31
Florida

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 25-CR-323 (LDH)