

The Florida Sun Sentinel

May 29, 2009 Friday

Randy Starks returns to Miami Dolphins OTAs after arrest: Starks' attorney claims defensive end is completely innocent

By Harvey Fialkov

DAVIE -- Randy Starks was back at his normal spot bowling over offensive lineman in search of running backs at Thursday's organized training activity session.

That's far more prudent than allegedly bumping into a police officer with a giant Freightliner on Ocean Drive, which was detailed in an arrest report from an incident involving the veteran defensive end that resulted in his arrest last weekend on South Beach.

Starks, who was charged with aggravated battery on a police officer and spent nearly four hours in handcuffs at the scene and much of Memorial Day in jail, turned down all interviews as he came off the field.

Dolphins coach Tony Sparano said the team and league are investigating the matter before both make decisions on Starks' future.

"Yes, I'm disappointed," Sparano said. "I'm disappointed any time -- again there are still facts out there now that have to be dealt with that we are still gathering -- when one of our players is in that position when it ends up in the newspapers and on TV.

"We took proper steps with the league right now. It's in their hands. Randy and I have spoke certainly about this whole situation. We're going to let the process take care of itself right now.

"I need to know the facts, too. This isn't something I can look at and immediately say I'm making this decision, boom, snap decision. That's not what I want to do at all."

Starks' attorney Ed O'Donnell refutes the police report, saying that the vehicle never struck the police officer, and that the arrest was racially motivated and completely without cause. Starks is 6-foot-3, 305 pounds, and African-American.

"It was racially motivated in my heart of hearts, but I want to make something clear," O'Donnell said. "The officer had the right to pull him over, but not handcuff him, search for drugs and arrest him the moment Randy stepped out of the car.

"That was totally illegal and violated the very essence of the fourth amendment.

"The car is larger than a semi [truck]. How could Randy see him on the side of the car? The guy couldn't reach the window with a step ladder. And the woman wasn't on his lap but on the console. Randy didn't do anything wrong and didn't commit a crime of any kind."

O'Donnell added that nine people were in the car, and not 13 as the report denoted. O'Donnell said that Starks, Dolphins linebacker William Kershaw and three former University of Maryland football players picked up four women they met at the Cleavelander hotel. He said that one of the women is a Chicago police officer who was shocked by the arresting officer's treatment of Starks.

O'Donnell added that absolutely no drugs or alcohol were involved or else the officer would've given Starks a sobriety test.

"I will do everything I can to establish his innocence," O'Donnell said. "He isn't only not not guilty but never should've been arrested."

Starks, 26, was also involved in a domestic dispute with his then fiancée during the 2006 season with the Titans, so this could be at least two strikes against him in the NFL's personal conduct policy.

Second-year defensive end Phillip Merling was starting opposite Kendall Langford, with Starks on the second team with Lionel Dotson during team drills.