

SPORTS AGENT CHARGED IN FRAUD INDICTMENT ALLEGES HE'S PART OF DETROIT DRUG RING

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Thursday, July 6, 2000

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A professional sports agent -- accused of fleecing Detroit Lions wide receiver Germane Crowell and other pro athletes of millions -- has been charged with laundering money for a Detroit drug ring.

Federal authorities charged William (Tank) Black, a former Michigan real estate investor based in Columbia, S.C., and seven other people. Authorities say they used private jets, false passports and crooked real estate deals to transfer drug proceeds from the streets of Detroit to the Caribbean.

Members of the ring allegedly scouted hideouts in Brazil when authorities began to close in on their operation, which authorities say shipped 500 kilograms of cocaine from Los Angeles to Detroit in 1997 and 1998 in specially rigged cars with secret compartments capable of carrying about 100 pounds of drugs.

An 11-count, 33-page federal indictment unsealed Wednesday named Black and John Bryant of Clarkston, and capped an investigation that began in 1997.

According to the indictment, the group took drug profits and tried to disguise their origin by moving the money through legitimate and phony businesses. The group, the indictment said, used real estate deals and bank transfers stretching from Detroit through South Carolina and the Bahamas to cover their dealings.

Even so, there were times, the indictment alleges, when the group had to haul \$1 million in cash in suitcases between Detroit and Chicago to pay for drug shipments.

Also named in the indictment were Claude Mask, James Haywood, **Dean Parker**, Brandon Neely, Kimberly **Parker**, Linda Wilson and James Franklin.

Franklin, 33 of Columbia, was the general counsel for Professional Management Inc., Black's sports agency. Wilson, 44, of Columbia operated World Express Travel Inc., a Columbia travel agency of which Black was chairman and chief executive officer.

Wilson has been arrested and is in jail in South Carolina. The whereabouts of Franklin are unknown.

Authorities said Haywood, 50, formerly of River Rouge, Mask, 71, formerly of Detroit, and **Dean Parker**, 31, and Kimberly **Parker**, 29, both formerly of Goodrich, are at large and being sought by federal authorities.

Bryant, 29, the former Clarkston resident, is in federal prison in Pennsylvania. Neely, 31, formerly of Southfield, is in federal prison in Ohio.

Black was arrested Wednesday and could face life in prison if convicted on all counts. Bryant, Franklin and Neely face up to 20 years if convicted.

Black, 43, had risen to become one of the top sports agents in the country, representing athletes including basketball star Vince Carter of the Toronto Raptors. But his business and personal empire collapsed earlier this year. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission filed a civil suit against him in February charging him with fraud. He is accused of bilking clients or mismanaging an estimated \$15 million of their funds. He also was indicted in Florida in February on charges of money laundering, conspiracy and criminal forfeiture.

Crowell was one of those alleged to have lost money to Black. Crowell wouldn't say how much he believes he lost, but court documents indicate the amount is approximately \$500,000.

Crowell said he was shocked when he heard of the charges against Black.

"Anytime you put your trust like that in somebody and they betray your trust, of course it's going to hurt you," he said. "It hurt me and my family. Anytime you lose anything when you first start your career, it's a major blow."

Anyone with information about the whereabouts of **Dean Parker**, Kimberly **Parker**, Mask or Haywood is asked to call the federal Drug Enforcement Agency at 313-234-4000 anytime or the U.S. Marshals Service at 313-234-5600 between 9-5 weekdays.

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Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

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Index Terms: FRAUD ; SPT ; WILLIAM BLACK ; TANK BLACK ; DRUG

Record Number: 0007060158

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