

Boat party sex scandal snares 4 Vikings players

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) - Quarterback Daunte Culpepper and three Minnesota Vikings teammates were charged Thursday with indecent, lewd and disorderly conduct for participating in a bawdy boat party that drew national attention.

Culpepper, currently on injured reserve, Bryant McKinnie, Fred Smoot and Moe Williams each were charged with three misdemeanors for their behavior aboard a boat on Lake Minnetonka, according to court papers. If convicted, each player faces up to a maximum of 90 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine for each count.

"The night of the incident, there was no shortage of in-

appropriate behavior on both boats," Hennepin County Sheriff Pat McGowan said. Prosecutor Steve Tallen charged the players based on an investigation by McGowan's office, which reviewed allegations of lewd and drunken behavior aboard two craft chartered for the outing on Oct. 6.

Crew members complained that some people took off their clothes and engaged in public sex acts during the cruise, according to Stephen Doyle, an attorney representing the boats' owners, Al & Alma's Supper Club and Charter Cruises in Mound, Minn.

Crew members were able to identify 17 Vikings among about 90 people on the two

boats; McGowan said authorities ultimately identified about 30 Vikings.

The criminal complaints said that after the boats left the dock, crew members noticed many female passengers going to a lower restroom area and emerging in scant clothing.

Culpepper got a lap dance from a naked woman, and put his hands on her buttocks; McKinnie placed a woman on a bar and performed oral sex; Smoot used a sex toy on two women; and Williams got a lap dance from a topless dancer and placed his

hands on her breasts.

Smoot and defensive end Lance Johnstone arranged the charter, according to court papers.

Smoot declined comment in the team's locker room before practice. Culpepper and Williams, also on injured reserve, are away from the team and undergoing rehabilitation. McKinnie wasn't seen in the locker room.

"According to NFL rules and union contracts, there is a large difference between allegations and charges and convictions," Coach Mike Tice said. "So until at any

point there is a conviction of some type, if there is, I have no action to take and nothing to say."

Vikings owner Zygi Wilf was unavailable for comment. Kevin Warren, an attorney for the team, said the allegations were "very disturbing" and said Wilf wouldn't allow playoff considerations to affect suspensions if he thought they were called for.

"He will do the right and ethical and honorable thing ...if that's two weeks from now or six months from now," Warren said.

Reports that some women at the party were paid to come from outside Minnesota had raised the possibility of federal charges, but U.S. Attorney Tom Heffelfinger said Thursday that no such charges would be brought. Heffelfinger cited insufficient evidence.

A Jan. 5 court date was set for the players.

The boat scandal hit the Vikings when they were already reeling, off to a 1-3 start, and made them the object of national ridicule on late-night TV and cable sports channels.



Richard, Venus and Serena Williams, left to right, stand as the jury enters the courtroom during the family's breach of contract lawsuit in West Palm Beach, Fla. last week.

Retrial for Williams sisters put on hold

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) - A breach-of-contract lawsuit contending that tennis stars Venus and Serena Williams and their father reneged on promises to play in a 2001 "Battle of the Sexes" match won't be retried until late next year.

The new trial won't be held until at least November in deference to their tennis season, attorneys in the case said Friday.

A mistrial was declared earlier this week after more than two weeks of testimony. An attorney representing their father, Richard Williams, asked one of the promoters whether someone had given her money in return for a share of any damages won.

Palm Beach County Circuit Judge Jeffrey A. Winikoff had previously warned lawyers not to bring up the subject because it might prejudice the jury. He also imposed a \$1,000 fine on the attorney who asked the question, but that fine was withdrawn Friday.

"Obviously, I'm delighted that the judge vacated the order against me," said attorney Jan Michael Morris of Boca Raton.

Promoters Carol Clarke and Keith Rhodes claim in the lawsuit that Richard Williams committed his daughters to play in the proposed match against male stars. The sisters testified that they alone had that authority, and Richard Williams said he never considered his discussions to be a formal contract.

John Romano, the promoters' attorney, said he had wanted a retrial date in January, but it was opposed by the Williams family's lawyers.

"I wanted to get back to trial right away, but we will accept it," Romano said.

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