

# Clarett indicted in Ohio robbery

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) - Former Ohio State star tailback Maurice Clarett was indicted Friday on charges of robbery and carrying a concealed weapon, the latest setback for the player who helped the Buckeyes win the 2002 national championship.

Clarett is accused of flashing a gun and demanding property from a man and a woman early Jan. 1. Police said he got into a sport utility vehicle with two men after he was identified by the bar owner, who happened to come out into the alley.

No one was injured, and only a cell phone was taken, police said.

Clarett was charged with two counts of aggravated robbery and four lesser robbery counts, Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O'Brien said.

Clarett denied the charges in a statement issued by his lawyer, William Settina.

"Mr. Clarett intends to fight this indictment with the same vigor and resolve he displayed in taking OSU to a national championship," Settina said in the statement.

Clarett only would be sentenced on two robbery charges if convicted, but O'Brien said the extra counts are "backup charges" to give a jury options. Clarett would face up to 26 years in prison if convicted on the two most serious armed robbery charges.

Settina criticized O'Brien for calling a news conference to announce the indictment,

saying it would make the selection of a fair and impartial jury more difficult.

O'Brien said he held a news conference in anticipation of strong media interest and to avoid spending a day returning individual calls.

Clarett, 22, was sought by police for almost two days before he turned himself in about the time the Buckeyes were completing a win over Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl on Jan. 2. He posted \$50,000 bond and was released from jail.

Clarett rushed for 1,237 yards and scored 16 touchdowns as an Ohio State freshman in 2002.

His final touchdown, in the second overtime of the Fiesta Bowl, gave the Buckeyes a 31-24 upset of top-ranked Miami for the national title.

The prosecutor urged the two people who were reportedly with Clarett in the SUV to come forward. Authorities are continuing to search for them and have not identified them, O'Brien said. They could face charges of being accomplices.

"Their silence in our view speaks complicity as opposed to lack of knowledge that a robbery was going to occur," O'Brien said.

The indictment is the latest legal problem for Clarett.

He pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor after admitting that he lied when he claimed \$10,000 in clothing, CDs, cash and stereo equipment

were taken from his car in the summer of 2003.

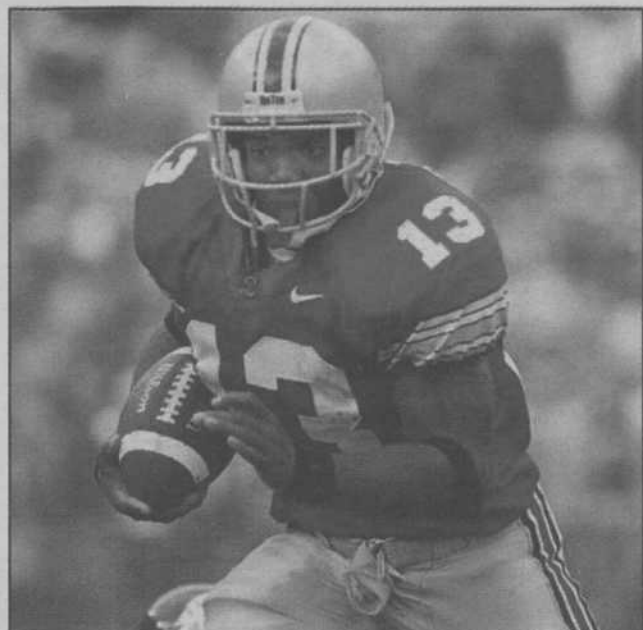
Ohio State suspending Clarett for misleading investigators, and for receiving special benefits worth thousands of dollars from a family friend.

Clarett dropped out of Ohio State, then challenged the NFL's requirement that players wait three years after high school before turning pro. The case went to the U.S. Supreme Court before Clarett lost.

In an interview with

ESPN The Magazine in 2004, Clarett said coaches and boosters arranged for him to get passing grades, cars and thousands of dollars while at Ohio State. The allegations weren't verified, and Clarett never responded to NCAA requests to be interviewed as part of its investigation into Ohio State's athletic program.

After two years in limbo, he was taken in the third round by the Denver Broncos in last year's draft. He was cut in August.



Maurice Clarett during prosperous times at Ohio State.

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## Taylor-Wright clash to settle best at 160

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) --Jermain Taylor and Winky Wright will fight in a middleweight championship bout June 17, agreeing to a deal Friday after more than a month of on-again, off-again negotiations.

Three sites are being considered for the fight: Las Vegas; Memphis, Tenn.; and Atlanta.

Gary Shaw, promoter for Wright, said Las Vegas was the most likely venue. The bout will be carried by HBO.

The WBC ordered Taylor (25-0) to make his next defense against Wright (50-3). If Taylor and Wright failed to reach an agreement, a purse offer was to be held in which other promoters would have the chance to bid for the fight.

Negotiations for the fight appeared to break down in January after Wright's team

asked for a 50-50 split of the purse. Taylor's team apparently began considering other options, such as a fight against Australia's Sam Soliman.

But Taylor promoter Lou DiBella said Shaw resumed talks this week. DiBella had said Taylor's team would risk losing the WBC belt rather than accepting an unfair deal.

Shaw said the terms of the deal were "the same as they were before," but declined to specify. It is believed the offer to Wright was about \$3 million, and Taylor would receive about \$4 million.

Taylor beat Bernard Hopkins in July to win the middleweight championship, then beat him again in December.

"On June 17, everybody is going to see clearly who's the real champion," DiBella said.

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