

Co-Defendant: Vick financed dogfighting

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) - One of Michael Vick's co-defendants pleaded guilty Monday to his role in a dogfighting conspiracy he says was financed almost entirely by the Atlanta Falcons quarterback.

As part of a plea agreement, Tony Taylor pledged to cooperate fully with the government in its prosecution of Vick and two other men accused of running an interstate dogfighting enterprise known as "Bad Newz Kennels" on Vick's property in rural Surry County.

"The 'Bad Newz Kennels' operation and gambling monies were almost exclusively funded by Vick," a summary of facts supporting the plea agreement and signed by Taylor states.

The plea deal requires Taylor to testify against Vick and his two remaining co-defendants if called upon to do so. Taylor cannot get a stiffer sentence or face any new charges based on any new information he provides, according to terms of the agreement.

Additional charges are possible, however, against Vick and the other two. Federal prosecutors have said a superseding indictment will be issued in August.

Vick's lead attorney, Billy Martin, did not immediately return a phone message.

Taylor, 34, of Hampton, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to travel in interstate commerce in aid of unlawful activities, and conspiring to sponsor a dog in an animal



Attorney Stephen Ashton Hudgins, left, leads Tony Taylor through a group filled with media outside U.S. District Court in Richmond, Va., July 30 after a plea agreement hearing.

underperforming dogs by drowning, hanging and other brutal means. Taylor admitted shooting one dog and electrocuting another when they did not perform well in test fights in the summer of 2002.

Vick, 27, attended several dogfights in Virginia and other states with his partners, according to the statement. Prosecutors claim the fights offered purses as high as \$26,000.

Taylor, who will be sentenced Dec. 14, said he was not promised any specific sentence in return for his cooperation with the government.

He faces a maximum of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, although federal sentencing guidelines likely will call for less. The range will be determined by the court's probation office, but the judge can depart from that range if he finds aggravating or mitigating circumstances.

Taylor and his attorney, Stephen A. Hudgins of Newport News, declined to answer reporters' questions as *(See Plea, Page 5)*

Activists pressuring Georgia to free former honor student

By Saeed Shabazz
Special to Sentinel-Voice

DOUGLAS COUNTY, Ga. (NNPA) - The Georgia Supreme Court has heard the appeal case against the release of Genarlow Wilson. A decision is expected by September.

"This is because of the community's pressure," said activist Al Sharpton.

Edward Dubose, the Georgia state president of the NAACP, agreed, that the grassroots pressure in the streets is making a difference in forcing officials to review the Genarlow Wilson case. "We see what the pressure is doing, and we don't plan to let up," Dubose told the *Final Call*.

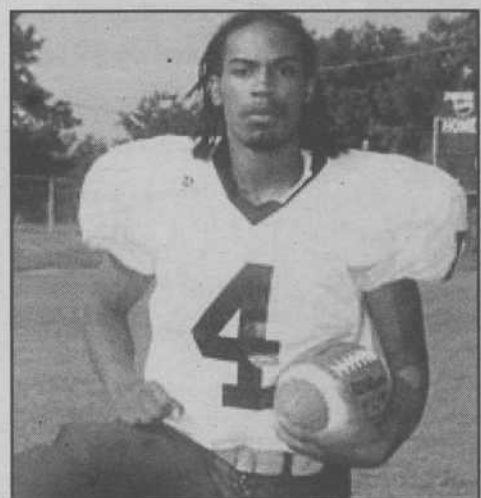
A prayer vigil and protest were held last month in Douglas County where Wilson was convicted of aggravated child molestation. Wilson was convicted under a since-repealed law making mouth to genital contact a felony — even if the participants are minors.

There is something very wrong going on in Douglas County, Dubose states.

"We see that at least five Black men are being held on similar charges, while Whites committing the same crimes are let go," Dubose said.

The NAACP is also calling for the ouster of Douglas County District Attorney David McDade.

Wilson's case is steadily gaining national attention. Democratic presidential candidate



Genarlow Wilson was a stellar student.

Sen. Barack Obama, in his address at a NAACP convention held in Detroit last month, made mention of the disparity between Wilson's case and Pres. Bush's commuting of former White House aide I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby's prison term.

"We know we have more work to do when Scooter Libby gets no prison time and a 21-year-old honor student, who hadn't even committed a felony, gets 10 years in prison," Sen. Obama said to loud cheers.

Sharpton, veteran civil rights leader Joseph Lowery and Rev. Raphael G. Warnock, pastor of Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church, joined with demonstrators on July 5 in front of the Douglas County courthouse to protest the delay in a bond hearing for the 21-year-old. They were also protesting the delay by the Georgia Supreme Court in hearing the state attorney general's appeal against the lower court's decision that Wilson should be set free.

A Monroe County Superior Court judge had ruled in June that Wilson's sentence was too harsh, since the crime is a misdemeanor, and should be given time served and released. The state legislature has changed the law to eliminate the mandatory 10-year sentence for aggravated child molestation, but lawmakers did not make the change retroactive.

Attorney General Thubert Baker, a Black man, disagrees with the lower court ruling, and is fighting to keep young Wilson in prison.

According to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the attorney general says the judge overstepped his authority when he granted Wilson's habeas corpus.

The newspaper is also reporting that Democratic State Sen. Emanuel Jones protested the release of a videotape of the sexual incident that was the cause of Wilson's brush with the law.

"It is an absolute, utter disgrace," the lawmaker said, calling the tape "child pornography." According to the newspaper, the videotape has been shown to legislators and reporters.

Saeed Shabazz writes for the *Final Call*.

fighting venture.

Vick pleaded not guilty to the same charges last week and said in a written statement that he looked forward to "clearing my good name." He also pleaded with the public to resist a rush to judgment.

The gruesome details outlined in the July 17 indictment have fueled public pro-

tests against Vick and prompted the suspension of some of his lucrative endorsement deals. Also, NFL commissioner Roger Goodell has barred Vick from the Falcons' training camp.

The summary of facts signed by Taylor supports the indictment's claims that the dogfighting ring executed



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