

Authorities issue warrants in Kerrigan attack

Assault: Authorities deny Harding named in the arrest warrants

PORTLAND (AP) — Arrest warrants were issued in the attack on Olympic figure skater Nancy Kerrigan, authorities said Thursday. ABC News reported that a second person confessed to the plot, said to involve rival Tonya Harding's ex-husband and bodyguard.

The FBI arrested a man at Portland Airport on a flight from Phoenix; Port of Portland spokesman Doug Roberts refused to give any details about him. ABC identified the man as Derrick Smith of Phoenix, and said he was involved in the alleged conspiracy to injure Kerrigan.

The network also described a Portland man, Steve Stant, as the alleged hit man who carried out the attack on Kerrigan at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships

in Detroit on Jan. 6.

The assailant escaped after breaking the glass out of a locked arena door.

In Detroit, deputy police chief Benny Napoleon said, "Warrants have been issued," but he did not specify the number of warrants or who had been named. Portland authorities refused to confirm that warrants had been issued but said they expected to make arrests Thursday on conspiracy charges.

Eckardt told authorities that Gillooly asked him to arrange the attack. The Oregonian reported Thursday, citing unidentified law enforcement sources. Harding and Gillooly were divorced Aug. 28, but later reconciled and have lived together since October.

After Kerrigan was clubbed on the knee, she was forced to withdraw from the figure skating championships, raising doubts about her ability to compete in the Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway, Feb. 12-27.

The U.S. Figure Skating Association named Kerrigan to the Olympic team anyway, along with Harding, 23, who went on to win the championship. Kerrigan won a bronze medal at the 1992 Winter Games in Albertville, France.

At the Detroit news conference Thursday, Napoleon said a woman from out-of-state called the police department Saturday and insisted on speaking with him.

"She indicated to me that she heard a conversation regarding the planned assault on Nancy Kerrigan" several months ago, Napoleon said. "She put it off as somebody talking. Once the assault occurred, she became frightened. She wanted to make sure the people responsible were apprehended."

Napoleon said the woman identified about four people, and he passed the names along to the FBI. The woman said she listened to a tape of the conversation a few months ago.

"I am not going to indicate who she implicated to me," Napoleon said. He said Harding was not implicated.

The plot allegedly involved Eckardt, Gillooly, an Eckardt acquaintance in Phoenix and a Portland man who hit Kerrigan for \$100,000. The Oregonian reported.

NBC News on Wednesday quoted sources as saying that after the men met in Portland, the hit man went to Boston, where Kerrigan lives and trains. It was there the investigators believe he planned to attack Kerrigan, but bad weather somehow foiled the attempt, NBC said.

Detroit police said Thursday they had recovered a collapsible metal baton, believed to be the weapon. A Detroit resident found it in a trash can behind the arena, police said.

Harding, Gillooly and Eckardt have dodged reporters all week, avoiding their homes where reporters have camped out. Monday, before specific allegations surfaced, they denied any involvement in the attack.

"You guys know me better than that," Harding said. "I had my hopes for a long time of competing against Nancy and proving I'm as good as her and better."

Figure skating defines life of Tonya Harding

Key dates in Tonya Harding's life and career in figure skating:

Nov. 12, 1970 — Tonya Harding is born in Portland to LaVona and Al Harding.

1974 — Harding discovers ice skating and begins private lessons. At age 4, she wins her first skating competition. Five years later, she lands her first triple loop on the ice.

1985-86 — At age 15, Harding has her first date with Jeff Gillooly. That same year her mother leaves her father, and Harding drops out of high school midway through her sophomore year.

1986 — Harding finishes sixth in her first senior division competition at the U.S. Figure Skating Association nationals.

1989 — Harding finishes a strong third in the nationals.

March 1990 — Harding marries Gillooly in Vancouver, Wash.

February 1991 — Harding places first in the U.S. figure skating nationals.

March 1991 — Harding places second in her first world championship competition.

June 1991 — Harding files for divorce from Gillooly and asks for a restraining order.

September 1991 — Harding beats defending world champion Kristi Yamaguchi, placing first in Skate America International.

February 1992 — Harding competes in the Olympics at Albertville, France, finishing

in fourth place.

March 1992 — Harding skates in the World Figure Skating Championships. She uses her husband's last name in competition for the first time, after apparently reconciling with him. This same month, Harding brandishes a baseball bat after a minor auto accident with another driver.

July 1993 — Harding again seeks a restraining order against Gillooly, charging her husband attempted to cause her bodily harm.

Aug. 28, 1993 — Harding and Gillooly are divorced in Columbia County, north of Portland.

November 1993 — Harding drops out of the Northwest Pacific Figure Skating Championships after organizers receive a threat on her life.

Jan. 9, 1994 — Harding places first in the U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Detroit and wins a berth at the 1994 Winter Olympics after Nancy Kerrigan, her chief competitor, is attacked outside the rink on Jan. 6.

Jan. 11, 1994 — Reports surface that the FBI is investigating allegations that Gillooly and Harding's bodyguard, Shawn Eckardt, may have been involved in the attack on Kerrigan.

Jan. 12, 1994 — Harding cancels a Jan. 13 appearance at a skating event in Fairfax, Va., telling organizers she's having a "media problem."

A private investigator in Portland, Gary Crowe, told The Associated Press that the FBI learned of the alleged plot from a local minister, Eugene Saunders.


Crowe said Saunders came to him for advice after speaking with a friend who played him a tape recording of men alleged to be Gillooly, Eckardt and the unidentified Arizona man discussing Kerrigan.

Crowe said Saunders told him that Gillooly asked on the tape, "Why don't we just kill her?" Eckardt allegedly responded: "We don't need to kill her. Let's just hit her in the knee."

Crowe said Saunders' friend became worried after receiving threats from the Arizona man because Gillooly had failed to pay \$100,000 as promised.

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