

Pro Bowl linebacker is charged with murder

By James Plicher
Associated Press

ATLANTA — Police charged Pro Bowl linebacker Ray Lewis with murder late Monday in the slaying of two people outside an Atlanta nightclub hours after the Super Bowl.

Lewis, middle linebacker for the Baltimore Ravens and the NFL's leading tackler this season, was arrested after a day of investigation into the slaying outside the Cobalt lounge in Atlanta's Buckhead neighborhood about 4 a.m. Monday.

Lewis was taken into custody and was expected to appear in court Tuesday morning.

Two men were stabbed during a fight that broke out just as the party was ending at the club. Witnesses said six men had fought and argued with the two victims. The men fled in a black Lincoln Navigator stretch limousine, firing at least five gunshots as they drove away.

Police found the vehicle, with New York license plates, in a parking lot behind a hotel near the shooting scene, Atlanta police spokesman John Quigley said.

Quigley and Georgia Bureau of Investigation spokesman John Bankhead both said they could not release details of the investigation.

Lewis, 24, was the only suspect

named by police.

One man died at the scene and the other victim died at Grady Memorial Hospital. The Fulton County Medical Examiner's office identified the victims as Jacinta Baker, 21, and Richard Lollar, 24, both of Decatur.

Despite the report of shots, Atlanta police Lt. M.C. Smith said the preliminary investigation indicated both victims were stabbed to death.

Lewis became the second NFL player this month charged with murder.

On Jan. 4, Carolina Panthers wide receiver Rae Carruth was charged with first-degree murder in the shooting death of Cherica

Adams, who was pregnant with their son. Carruth was released by the Panthers after the charges were lodged.

Just last Friday, in his state of the NFL address, commissioner Paul Tagliabue commented on the recent rash of criminal charges against current NFL players.

"Can we separate ourselves from society? Of course not," Tagliabue said. "We can't predict what NFL players will do any more than we can predict students shooting other students or workers shooting fellow workers."

Lewis was drafted by Baltimore in the first round of the 1996 draft after leaving the University of Mia-

mi following his junior season. He was the Ravens' MVP this season and in 1997.

"We're trying to gather as much information as we can," team spokesman Kevin Byrne said. "Frankly, most of the information we have received has been through the media. We have not spoken to Ray Lewis yet or his representative. We're waiting until we get more information until we comment."

Lewis had been scheduled to leave Atlanta Monday morning for the Pro Bowl, to be played Sunday in Honolulu, but had changed his flight to Tuesday when he found he was wanted for questioning, Byrne said.

Women

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In the Associated Press poll, Oregon is ranked No. 26, and in the ESPN/USA Today Coaches' poll, it's No. 29.

But in the Ratings Percentage Index — the poll you don't hear much about but that is supposed to carry the most weight when tournament seeding-time rolls around — Oregon is No. 50. Or, one loss away from bubble status.

"What concerns me is that inability of the Pac-10 to move up," head coach Jody Runge said. "The more we beat up on each other, the harder it is."

"People have not looked at the strength of our conference, and that's unfortunate because it's a good league — it's a great league."

If Arizona, currently ranked No. 20 in the RPI, becomes the Ducks' 20th-straight victim at McArthur Court, then the Ducks gain a better footing in the Pac-10 race but also see their strength of schedule diminished.

What do they say, life's not fair?

First-place "UCLA [presently No. 29] keeps dropping," Runge said. "The rest of us are having a tough time. And if Arizona gets beat, it just gets tougher."

Oh, there's also the matter of Pac-10 teams not exactly being world-beaters in nonconference play.

Overall this season, Pac-10 teams are 61-47 against out-of-conference teams.

That's OK, except that in matchups with teams ranked highly in the RPI, the Pac-10 floundered, going 1-3 against the top-ranked SEC, 0-4 against the No. 2 Big East and 2-4 against the No. 3 ACC.

That hasn't helped hedge the reputations of either the Pac-10 or the Ducks. Nor has the type of media coverage they've received, Runge said.

"People don't see us," she said. "It's a good thing they saw us against UCLA, but [FoxSports commentator] Ann Meyers doesn't market us at all. It sounded like UCLA was still winning the game when they were down six. It's very hard

for [the Ducks] to adopt a blue-collar anthem when you don't get any credit for that — but I'm not sure that's something we can change."

Slowly but surely

"Slowly, definitely slowly," said a frustrated Lindsey Dion after Monday's practice. "That's the key word."

Dion was ordered out of prac-

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Jody Runge
head coach

tices and games until she could pass neurological testing after suffering a concussion against California on Jan. 13. She missed the game against Stanford two days later, staggered through much of the Washington game on Jan. 20, then sustained post-concussion syndrome when she hit her head diving for a loose ball against Washington State.

Dion finally passed on Monday and was thus cleared to play by one doctor and cleared on a provisional basis by a second.

The provision is that she must make her comeback slowly, which translated into only "two or three" drills at Monday's practice.

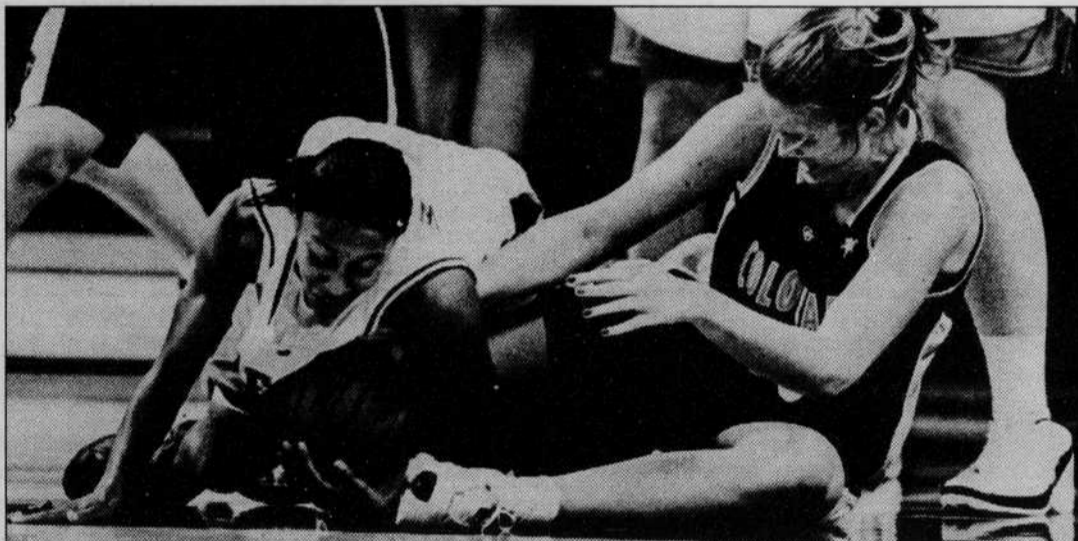
It's an excruciating task for the hard-nosed junior.

"We're just working her back into it slowly, which frustrates the heck out of her," Runge said. "She's really mad."

"But like with any injury you don't throw yourself into it 110 percent when she hasn't been practicing all week. We've got to get her legs under her, and then let her go hard Wednesday and Thursday."

Before her injury, Dion had started every game and was averaging nearly 27 minutes per game.

When the forward from Fresno, Calif. initially underwent neurological testing last Monday, the consensus was that five days had to elapse between then and the first time she would be allowed into any physical activity.



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