

## EX-NFL STAR ARRESTED IN LA ON NEW ORLEANS RAPE WARRANT

**LOS ANGELES:** Former football star Darren Sharper, wanted by New Orleans police as a suspect in two rapes, was arrested on Thursday in Los Angeles, where he pleaded not guilty a week ago to charges of drugging four other women and raping two of them.

The two women accusing him in New Orleans say Sharper, 38, and an acquaintance, Erik Nunez, 26, each raped them both at the same location on the night of Sept. 23, 2013, according to a New Orleans Police Department statement on Thursday.

No other details of the alleged assaults were disclosed. Sharper's attorney, Nandi Campbell, said neither she

nor her client had any comment.

Sharper, who resides in Miami Beach, Florida, was taken into custody on a fugitive warrant on Thursday evening in Los Angeles, though additional details of his arrest were not available, Los Angeles Police Department spokeswoman Nuria Vanegas said.

Authorities did not disclose any information on the possible whereabouts of Nunez. Sharper, a defensive back who played 14 years in the National Football League and helped the New Orleans Saints to a Super Bowl title in 2010, pleaded not guilty to sexual assault and drug charges in Los Angeles on Feb. 20.

According to Los Angeles prosecu-

tors, Sharper drugged two women with spiked drinks and raped one of them in a hotel room in October, then drugged two more women and raped one of them at the same hotel in January.

He pleaded not guilty last Thursday to two counts of rape by use of drugs, four counts of furnishing a controlled substance and one count of possession of a controlled substance. The five-time Pro Bowl player, suspended from his job as an NFL Network on-air commentator after his arrest in January, was released on \$1 million bail in Los Angeles.

Prosecutors had wanted to raise the bail amount to \$10 million, citing sex crime investigations against him in

Louisiana, Nevada, Arizona and Florida. On the same day that Sharper appeared in Los Angeles court, police in Miami Beach released a report detailing a woman's allegation that the football star had also raped her.

The woman told investigators she was intoxicated when she went to Sharper's condo in 2012 and fell asleep. When she woke up, she realized Sharper was having sex with her and left, according to the police report.

The woman reported the 2012 incident to Miami Beach police two days after Sharper was arrested in Los Angeles on Jan. 17, police said. No charges in the case have been filed. — Reuters

LA ANGELS REWARD  
YOUNG TROUT WITH  
MILLION-DOLLAR SALARY

**LOS ANGELES:** The Los Angeles Angels agreed to a record \$1 million, one-year contract for 22-year-old center fielder Mike Trout on Wednesday, setting a positive tone for their ongoing conversations regarding a massive long-term deal.

The \$1 million figure is the most for a Major League Baseball player who has not yet qualified for arbitration, according to the Major League Baseball's website (mlb.com).

Trout, with just two full seasons in the majors, is considered by some already to be the best all-around player in the game. "I think Mike's earned that," Angels general manager Jerry Dipoto said about the salary for Trout. "He's certainly been an extraordinary player, and we have no doubt that he'll continue to be that player."

The previous high-salary mark for players who have yet to qualify for arbitration was \$900,000, received by Phillies first baseman Ryan Howard in 2007 and then-Cardinals first baseman Albert Pujols in 2003.

Players with less than four seasons in the majors can have their contracts renewed by their clubs at a minimal increase, potentially saving the team considerable money.

For most players with less than three years of Major League Baseball service time, clubs can determine their salaries, as long as it's at least the 2014 minimum of \$500,000.

Trout, however, has been so sensational, the Angels were running the risk of alienating the power-hitting speedster, who they hope to lock up with a long term contract. A recent report by Yahoo! Sports said the Angels and Trout's representatives were working on a possible six-year, \$150 million contract.

Last spring, the Angels gave Trout only a \$20,000 increase from his American League Rookie of the Year season in 2012, in a contract totaling \$510,000. Asked why the Angels paid above and beyond what was required this time, Dipoto said: "Honestly, because I think we felt like his performance was exceptional."

"There are players that force you to break a rule, and what Trout just did for two consecutive years forced us to break our own rule." Trout finished second to Tigers slugger Miguel Cabrera for the American League Most Valuable Player Award in each of the past two years. Last season, he batted .323 with 27 home runs, 97 runs batted in and 33 stolen bases. — Reuters



**PALM BEACH GARDENS:** Josh Teater plays a shot on the third hole during the second round of The Honda Classic at PGA National Resort and Spa yesterday in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. — AFP

MCILROY TAKES CHARGE AT  
HONDA WITH OPENING 63

**PALM BEACH GARDENS:** Rory McIlroy produced a barnstorming back nine, charging home with five birdies, to take the first-round lead at the \$6 million Honda Classic in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida on Thursday.

A year after quitting the tournament mid-round with his game in a shambles, McIlroy cut a contrasting figure on his way to a flawless seven-under-par 63 in relatively benign afternoon conditions at PGA National.

"I made a great par save on nine which kept that bogey-free round alive," the 24-year-old Northern Irishman told Golf Channel after seizing a one-shot lead over American Russell Henley.

Buoyed by that 10-foot par putt at the ninth, McIlroy birdied the next three holes and added further birdies on his last two holes, much to the delight of his parents Gerry and Rosie, who were in the gallery.

"It's a good ball-striker's course," said McIlroy, who looked ominously close to regaining the form that made him the world's top-ranked player at the time of his meltdown 12 months ago.

"If you can keep your ball in play and give yourself plenty of birdie chances, that's the name of the game here."

McIlroy's sizzling start against the strongest field in the world so far this year overshadowed Australian Adam Scott, one of his playing partners on the day.

Not that Scott, gearing up to defend his Masters title in April, started badly as he opened with a 68 to sit five strokes off the pace. However the Australian's move up the leaderboard stalled when he drowned his tee shot at the par-three 15th, the first of three dangerous holes in a stretch known as the "Bear Trap", in honour of course designer Jack Nicklaus.

**Inconsistent Woods**

Five-times major champion Phil Mickelson did not do a lot wrong while carding a 70 in the afternoon while world number one Tiger Woods had an inconsistent 71 in the morning and ended the day tied for 81st in a field of 144.

Second-placed Henley started with four consecutive birdies and was five under

through six holes but it was a par on his 12th hole, the par-five third, that most impressed. He pulled his second shot, an "horrendous" six-iron that ended partly submerged in a water hazard, with a bunker between his ball and the hole.

Henley then removed his right shoe and sock and conjured up an outstanding third shot to inside 10 feet, only to miss the birdie putt. "I've never had that shot in my life," he said. "I tried to treat it like a bunker shot."

Mickelson, meanwhile, was not at his best in his first competitive round as a professional on the course, but he sounded mildly satisfied.

"I did some things really well and some things poorly," the American left-hander said, citing a need to improve his distance control with his irons. "I've just got to get that fine-tuning down. It's a very difficult course but when you hit good shots you get rewarded with good birdie opportunities."

Fifty-six players broke par on a day when players were allowed preferred lies due to heavy pre-tournament rain that left the fairways damp. — Reuters