

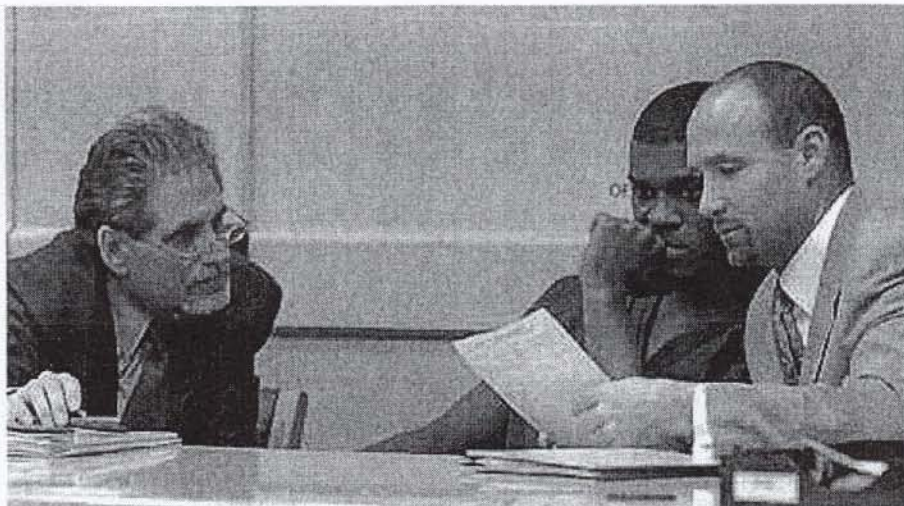
MIAMI RECRUIT RELEASED FROM JAIL

BY CATHERINE WILSON

Associated Press

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MIAMI (AP) — Top Miami recruit Willie Williams was released from jail Friday, three days after surrendering on an arrest warrant for allegedly violating probation.



Willie Williams confers with his attorneys Paul Lazarus, left, and Brad Cohen. Pool, Lou Toman/Associated Press

The 19-year-old Williams was freed after posting a \$2,500 bond shortly before 6 p.m., jail officials said. He was escorted out by family members, and hopped into the back of a waiting sports utility vehicle and was left without comment.

"We are extremely happy the judge had enough confidence in him to give him back bond," defense attorney Paul Lazarus said.

Prosecutor Thomas Crowder asked that Williams be held without bond until trial. Circuit Judge Michael Kaplan rejected the request but said he wanted court employees assigned with monitoring the defendant to "keep their thumb on Mr. Williams."

"These are very serious matters," the judge said. "These are matters the court does not take lightly."

While free on bond, Williams must stay home and be monitored by an ankle bracelet when not in school or court. A hearing was set for March 24.

Williams denied violating probation. The latest charges against him stem from a five-hour spree on a recruiting trip to Gainesville on Super Bowl weekend.

Williams is accused of setting off three fire extinguishers in his hotel, grabbing a woman against her will and hitting a man at a bar. He was charged with felony malicious damage to fire extinguishers, misdemeanor criminal mischief and misdemeanor battery.

If convicted, Williams could face five years in prison - the maximum sentence on the felony burglary case in which he pleaded no contest and was sentenced to 18 months probation in July 2002. His probation expired Wednesday, hours after the Gainesville charges were filed.

Lazarus said hotel has been reimbursed for damage, which, according to court documents,