

Falcons rookie maintains innocence in 5 felony charges

BY CHARLES ODUM
AP SPORTS WRITER

ATLANTA — The attorney for Atlanta Falcons rookie James Pearce Jr. says Pearce “maintains his innocence” as he faces five felony charges following his arrest near Miami on Saturday night.

Pearce's charges include fleeing police after what Doral police said was a domestic dispute with WNBA player Riquea Jackson. Pearce was arrested after crashing his car. His charges include two counts of aggravated battery with a deadly weapon and aggravated stalking.

According to details of the arrest in the complaint/arrest affidavit obtained by The Associated Press from the Miami-Dade County state attorney's office on Monday, Pearce allegedly refused an initial order from police to “get on the floor” when they responded to the report of the domestic

dispute. The police account says Pearce then drove away and hit a police officer's left knee with his Lamborghini “intentionally in an attempt to evade arrest.”

According to the police account of the arrest, Pearce wrecked his vehicle and then continued in his attempt to elude police by running before being apprehended following a “short struggle.”

The police account said Jackson told police she ended the relationship with Pearce after three years and blocked his phone number before Pearce continued to contact her by using a different number.

According to the police account, Jackson told police she attempted to drive away from Pearce and was driving toward the Doral police station to seek help when Pearce “intentionally collided into the rear of her vehicle with his SUV” before police arrived.

Pearce posted bond of



Atlanta Falcons linebacker James Pearce Jr. (27) is interviewed after an NFL football game against the New Orleans Saints, on Jan. 4 in Atlanta.

\$20,500 Sunday at the Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Center.

“We look forward to working with the State Attorney’s office in fully investigating this case and uncovering the truth,” Pearce's attorney, Jacob Nunez, said in a statement released to The Associated Press on

Monday.

“Mr. Pearce maintains his innocence and urges the public to understand that while allegations have the power to shape a narrative, that it is hardly the full, complete story. We look forward to vigorously defending our client and remain confident that he will continue contributing

positively to both his team and the community he serves so well.”

Nunez declined further comment.

Pearce was given a pre-trial stay-away order from Jackson. Pearce and Jackson's relationship began when both played at Tennessee. Jackson sat beside Pearce at the 2025 NFL draft.

The Falcons said in a statement Saturday they are aware of the arrest. “We are in the process of gathering more information and will not have any further comment on an open legal matter at this time,” the team said.

The charges could threaten Pearce's future with the team.

The Falcons traded their 2026 first-round draft pick to the Los Angeles Rams for the No. 26 overall pick in last year's draft used to select Pearce. He then set a Falcons rookie record with a team-leading 10 1/2 sacks. The Falcons set a team record

with 57 sacks, one year after finishing next to last in the league with only 31.

Despite the improved pass rush, the Falcons finished 8-9 for their eighth consecutive losing season. Second-year coach Raheem Morris and general manager Terry Fontenot were fired. New president of football Matt Ryan has helped reshape the team's leadership, including the hirings of coach Kevin Stefanski and general manager Ian Cunningham.

Ryan, Cunningham and Stefanski already faced difficult offseason decisions, including the possible release of veteran quarterback Kirk Cousins despite starter Michael Penix Jr.'s uncertain status for the start of the season as he recovers from a knee injury. Pearce's arrest and uncertain legal ramifications add significant difficulty to the challenge of building the team's first winning season and playoff appearance since 2017.

GAME

FROM PAGE B1

in 59% of the bets and 53% of the money.

The total closed at 45.5, with the under hitting. The under took in 55% of the bets and 50% of the money.

Walker was +400 to win the MVP award and was the fourth-most popular player in terms of number of bets (6.3%) and fourth-most money (5.3%).

Seattle tight end A.J. Barner scored the first touchdown. He was +1200 and was the fifth-most bet player to score the first touchdown.

The five most popular



Seattle Seahawks quarterback Sam Darnold (14) throws a pass under pressure from New England Patriots defensive tackle Christian Barmore (90) during the first half of the NFL Super Bowl 60 football game on Sunday in Santa Clara, Calif.

player props to win that went over were: Maye over 35.5

rush yards (-110), Walker III over 20.5 receiving yards

(-120), Maye over 0.5 interceptions thrown (-140), Cooper Kupp over 3.5 receptions (+120) and TreVeyon Henderson over 3.5 receiving yards (-130).

The five most popular player props to win that went under were: Stefon Diggs under 4.5 receptions made (+105), Jaxon Smith-Njigba under 91.5 receiving yards (-110), Rhamondre Stevenson under 14.5 rushing attempts (-140), Sam Darnold under 117.5 first half passing yards (-115) and Maye under 6.5 rushing attempts (+105).

UPSET OF THE WEEK

Chris Gotterup shot a final-round 64 to force a playoff against Hideki Matsuyama at the WM Phoenix Open.

He then birdied the first playoff hole to earn his second win of the season. Entering the event, he was +4000 to win and took in 3.5% of the bets and 1.5% of the money.

COMING UP

As soon as the NFL season, the odds for next year's Super Bowl winner were released.

The Seahawks are the favorites at +800, followed the Rams at +900, the Ravens and Bills at +1200, and the Packers and Eagles at +1400.

Up next are the Lions, Chiefs, Chargers and Patriots at +1600, the 49ers at +1700 and the Broncos, Texans and Jaguars at +2000.

This column was provided to The Associated Press by BetMGM online sportsbook.

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the Elizabethtown Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, February 24, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at the Pritchard Community Center, located at 404 South Mulberry Street, Elizabethtown, Kentucky. The hearing will be held to consider the following:

- A Zoning Map Amendment request to change the zoning classification from R-1 Suburban Residential to C-3 Regional Commercial and R-6 High Density Residential for property located at 707 St. John Rd.

Hearing No. 2026-PC-02

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