

Pot case against Nugget dropped

Anthony happy to turn attention fully to basketball

By Brian D. Crecente Rocky Mountain News November 18, 2004

Denver Nuggets star Carmelo Anthony will not go to court and will not pay \$100 - the Denver City Attorney's Office dropped the drug charge against him Wednesday.

"I'm glad that the charges were dismissed," Anthony said shortly after Wednesday night's game against Toronto at the Pepsi Center. "Now I can just go on and continue to think about basketball."

The charge was thrown out after James "Slim" Cunningham, Carmelo's on-time promoter and friend, signed a statement saying the marijuana found in Anthony's bag was his.

"After reviewing the evidence that would be presented at trial, we believe there is not a reasonable likelihood of proving the charge beyond a reasonable doubt," City Attorney Cole Finnegan wrote in a prepared statement.

Anthony faced a court date and the possibility of a \$100 fine if found guilty. Jail time was not a possibility in the petty misdemeanor possession of marijuana case.

"Had we gone to trial, Carmelo would have won hands down," said Anthony's attorney, Dan Recht. "He didn't know about the drug, and Cunningham did know and said he knew."

Anthony was charged with possessing less than 1 ounce of marijuana on Oct. 15 after a plastic bag with the drug was found in his carry-on backpack as the team waited to board a flight to Milwaukee for a preseason game.

Anthony and Cunningham both said the drug belonged to Cunningham.

Cunningham even flew to Denver the next day from St. Louis to sign an affidavit swearing to the fact that the marijuana was his.

Cunningham said that he borrowed the backpack from Anthony, who was out of town at the time. When he returned it to Anthony's home, he left the drug in the bag, Cunningham said.

Cunningham's statement was sent to police for a decision on whether he will be cited.

Although police could not say if a decision had been made Wednesday, Cunningham's attorney, Frank Moya, said his client wouldn't be charged.

"I spoke at length late this afternoon with the police officer (handling this decision)," he said. "He advised they weren't going to pursue charges against Mr. Cunningham."

Anthony found out about the charge being dropped about 2 p.m., Recht said.

"This particular case has seemingly received more prosecutorial attention than any petty case in Denver history," Recht said. "We fought this from the beginning because (Anthony) was innocent. His reputation among his fans, especially children, is very important to him, and he didn't want them to get the wrong impression."

Anthony understands he can't make people believe him.

"Everybody's going to think what they want to think," he said. "All I can do is keep remaining positive and just keep playing basketball and keep being a role model to my fans."

He added that the news will help him get back into the game.

"Early in the season, I was thinking about it, worried about what they were going to do," he said. "But now I can try to put basketball back in the middle and fit everything else around it."

Nuggets General Manager Kiki Vandeweghe said there was no doubt in his mind that Anthony was innocent.

"I happened to be there. I kind of saw the reaction on Carmel's face and the surprise" at the airport, he said.

"There are always going to be people who say one way or another, but that's why it was so important to everybody that the city attorney took a month on this to really exhaust every single possibility, and we really appreciate they took so much time with it," Vandeweghe said.

Recht said the outcome was, for him a foregone conclusion.

"We knew the story," he said. "We just didn't know the punch line, and now we know it."

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