



NFL Star Donte Stallworth Pleads Guilty to DUI Manslaughter

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Associated Press

MIAMI —

Cleveland Browns wide receiver Donte' Stallworth took full responsibility for killing a pedestrian while driving drunk in Florida and began serving a 30-day jail sentence Tuesday after he pleaded guilty to DUI manslaughter.

Stallworth also reached a confidential financial settlement to avoid a potential lawsuit from the family of 59-year-old Mario Reyes, according to Stallworth attorney Christopher Lyons. Reyes was struck and killed March 14 by Stallworth, who was driving his black 2005 Bentley after a night drinking at a swanky hotel bar.

Stallworth, 28, told Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Dennis Murphy that he hopes to get involved in drunken driving education programs.

"I accept full responsibility for this horrible tragedy," said Stallworth, who was accompanied at the hearing by his parents, siblings and other supporters. "I will bear this burden for the rest of my life."

Stallworth faced 15 years in prison. After his release from jail, Stallworth must serve two years of house arrest and spend eight years on probation.

The NFL has said it will review the matter for possible disciplinary action. Lyons said the plea agreement will allow Stallworth to resume his football career.

Stallworth also must undergo drug and alcohol testing, will have a lifetime driver's license suspension and must perform 1,000 hours of community service. Lyons said after five years, Stallworth could win approval for limited driving such as for employment.

Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle cited Stallworth's lack of previous criminal record, cooperation with police and willingness to accept responsibility as factors in the plea deal. Rundle also said the Reyes family — particularly the victim's 15-year-old daughter — wanted the case resolved to avoid any more pain.

"For all of these reasons, a just resolution of this case has been reached," Rundle said.

None of the Reyes family attended the hearing. Their attorney, Rodolfo Suarez, read a statement saying the family wants to "bring closure to this emotional and tragic event." Suarez was not immediately available to comment after the hearing.

After a night drinking at a bar in Miami Beach's Fountainebleau hotel, police said Stallworth hit Reyes, a construction crane operator who was rushing to catch a bus after finishing his shift around 7:15 a.m. Stallworth told police he flashed his lights in an attempt to warn Reyes, who was not in a crosswalk when he was struck.

Stallworth had a blood-alcohol level of .126 after the crash, well above Florida's .08 limit. Stallworth stopped after the crash and immediately told officers he had hit Reyes. Police estimated Stallworth was driving about 50 mph in a 40 mph zone.

Stallworth signed a seven-year, \$35 million contract with the Browns before last season but was injured much of the year.



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The California native and University of Tennessee college star has also played in the NFL for New England, Philadelphia and New Orleans.

The night before the crash, Stallworth earned a \$4.5 million roster bonus from the Browns.

David Cornwell, a Stallworth attorney handling the NFL situation, said he has kept top league officials apprised of the case.

"Whenever it is appropriate to do so, we are prepared to discuss the circumstances under which Donte' will resume his career," Cornwell said.

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