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## Former Trojan basketball player charged with murder

## By TED SULLIVAN

Bozeman, Mont., Daily Chronicle Staff Writer

Two former Montana State University athletes were arrested and charged with deliberate homicide Thursday for their roles in the apparent drug-related slaying last week of Jason Wright.

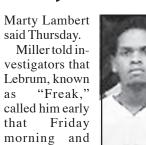
Former MSU basketball player Perkins Restau-Branden Miller, 22, and former MSU football player John Lebrum, 22, face charges in the June 23 shooting death of Wright, who was found dead in a field off Huffine Lane west of Bozeman.

Miller last played at Colby Community College during the 2003-2004 season.

Both men are accused of kidnapping Wright, 26, and later destroying evidence of the homicide and disposing of Wright's black Chevrolet Tahoe in Belgrade.

Miller is being held in Gallatin County's jail on \$1 million bail. Lebrum has not had his initial

appearance in court.



wanted a ride to B. Miller

rant on Bozeman's West Main Street, where Wright, who police say was a suspected cocaine dealer, was dining.

According to court records, investigators say the details of the crime are as follows:

Miller and Lebrum parked near Perkins and waited for Wright to come outside. When Wright left the restaurant, Lebrum ran toward him, near Wright's body. hit him on the head, and loaded him into the back seat of Wright's Tahoe. Lebrum then drove the Tahoe west on Huffine Lane

Miller told investigators he drove away in his own car in the other di-

and additional people may be apartment he shares with former and beaten. Investigators found charged,"GallatinCountyAttorney MSU basketball player Ja' Ron several .40-caliber shell casings

Jefferson. At about 3 a.m. a witness was driving on Huffine Lane west of Bozeman and turned onto Ferguson

Avenue. The witness saw a maroon, GMC Envoy parked in the middle of the southbound lane on Ferguson between the entrance to Casey's Corner and Fallon Avenue.

Approaching the Envoy, the witness saw Wright running away from the vehicle. Wright appeared to be scared and in a hurry.

Wright attempted to flag down the witness and even lunged at the vehicle in an attempt to stop it. The witness kept driving.

The Envoy belongs to former MSU basketball player Aaron Rich. Tire tracks from Rich's Envoy later were matched to tire tracks found

Thirty minutes later, a man who lives on Love Lane told investigators he heard five gunshots near his home. He then heard a vehicle speed away, its tires spinning.

About 10 hours later, Wright's "The investigation is ongoing rection, eventually going to an body was found. He had been shot

near his body.

On Sunday, investigators learned more details about Wright, a former American Legion baseball player and coach in Livingston and Bozeman and a 1998 graduate of Park High School. He had been a cocaine dealer, police say.

They searched his apartment in the 500 block of Michael Grove Avenue and found "pays and owes" sheets related to drug dealing. A handgun Wright owned was missing.

On Monday, Lebrum called Miller, asked him to get a bottle of bleach and meet him. The two then went to the Hilton Garden Inn where Wright's Tahoe was parked.

The back window was broken and the interior was covered in blood. Miller and Lebrum wiped down the car with bleach and Miller took Wright's laptop computer. The two then abandoned the car near the intersection of Dakota Street and Rosebud Avenue in Belgrade.

On Tuesday, the Tahoe was found outside a business in Belgrade. Dried blood was found on the exterior and interior of the vehicle. A

small bag of cocaine and an empty Thursday during a press confercan of bleach were found near the Tahoe.

Also on Tuesday, investigators received a tip that Wright's computer had been found in a Dumpster at MSU. When detectives searched the Dumpster, they also found documents with Wright's name on them along with a birthday card and receipt belonging to Miller, who later admitted throwing the items in the Dumpster.

Another witness, former MSU basketball player and assistant coach James Clark, told investigators Miller had several handguns and Wright's identification card. Clark was related to Wright through marriage before Wright divorced.

The handguns later were found in a locker at MSU's Brick Breeden Fieldhouse.

The locker containing the guns was labeled "1 Wilson." Jacques Wilson, a current member of the MSU basketball team, wears jersey No. 1.

One of the handguns found in the locker was the same caliber as the shell casings found near Wright's body, Sheriff Jim Cashell said

ence.

In the courtroom with about 20 people looking on Thursday, Miller, wearing orange jailhouse coveralls, spoke softly.

He appeared on video from the nearby jail. He told the judge he understood the charges against him. He said he had read his rights. And he didn't have any questions for the judge.

Gallatin County Attorney Marty Lambert asked the judge for \$1 million bail, saying Miller helped "ambush" Wright, leading to his death. He also said Miller must remain in jail to protect witnesses with information on the homicide.

Judge Scott Wyckman set bail at \$1 million. Hours after Miller appeared in court, authorities arrested Lebrum, who was expected to appear in court on Friday. If convicted, Lebrum and Miller could be sentenced to death. They also face \$50,000 fines.

They will enter pleas to the charges in court at a future date.

Colby Free Press contributed to this story.



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