



U.S. Department of Justice

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**FORMER NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION PLAYER AND  
COACH DAMON JONES PLEADS GUILTY FOR HIS PARTICIPATION IN  
FRAUDULENT SPORTS BETTING AND RIGGED POKER CONSPIRACIES**

***Defendant Used Non-Public Injury and Lineup Information to Place Fraudulent Wagers  
Worth Hundreds of Thousands of Dollars and Participated in Rigged Illegal Poker Games  
that Defrauded Victims of Millions of Dollars***

Earlier today, in federal court in Brooklyn, Damon Jones pleaded guilty to two counts of wire fraud conspiracy in two separate cases: one count for his role in a scheme to use inside information derived from multiple National Basketball Association (NBA) teams, players and coaches, to profit from illegal betting activity; and one count for participating in a scheme to rig illegal poker games across the country. The loss amount for both cases totals more than \$10 million. Jones was a professional basketball player with the NBA's Cleveland Cavaliers from 2005 to 2008. After his playing career, Jones served on the coaching staffs of the Cavaliers and the Los Angeles Lakers. The proceedings were held before U.S. Magistrate Judge Joseph A. Marutollo.

Joseph Nocella Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; James C. Barnacle, Jr., Assistant Director in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI), Michael Alfonso, Acting Special Agent in Charge, Homeland Security Investigations, New York (HSI); Jessica S. Tisch, Commissioner, New York City Police Department (NYPD); and Phoebe S. Sorial, Executive Director, New York Waterfront Commission, announced the guilty pleas.

“As shown by his guilty pleas today, Damon Jones converted his fame and ties to professional basketball into a multi-faceted criminal betting operation. He used private locker room and medical information from multiple NBA teams to cheat legitimate sportsbooks. He also, separately, lured unsuspecting victims to high-stakes rigged poker games,” stated United States Attorney Nocella. “Jones will now face the consequences for his corrupt conduct. Insider betting and rigged poker schemes erode the integrity of American sports and fair contest. This

Office will continue in its strong tradition of holding accountable anyone who seeks to profit through fraud and corruption.”

“Former NBA player Damon Jones admitted to exploiting his profession and fame to help others cheat in two separate rigged betting schemes. With our federal and local law enforcement partners, the FBI continues to hold accountable those who threaten the integrity of American sports,” stated FBI Assistant Director in Charge Barnacle.

“As today's plea makes clear, Damon Jones used his presence at underground card tables to fuel fraudulent betting and fixed poker schemes that stole millions from victims. Status, access, and a high-profile career do not exempt any individual from answering for criminal conduct. This outcome is the product of a sustained, coordinated effort by HSI New York and our law enforcement partners, who together traced the money, unraveled the cheating technology, and exposed the full scope of these schemes,” stated HSI New York Acting Special Agent in Charge Alfonso.

“The defendant in this case traded his reputation for greed and fraud,” stated NYPD Commissioner Tisch. “By exploiting his access to the NBA, and rigging illegal poker games across the country, Damon Jones attempted to orchestrate a scheme that defrauded victims of millions of dollars. Thanks to our investigators, law enforcement partners, and the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York, we are upholding the integrity of the game and ensuring accountability for those who break the law and betray the public’s trust.”

“While his unsuspecting victims believed Damon Jones was playing by the rules, he was playing an entirely different game. He used his celebrity as the opening bet and when it was time to cash in, he enriched not only himself but also some of the most notorious La Cosa Nostra crime families. His guilty plea today sends a clear message: exploiting trust for personal gain is not a game you can win,” stated New York Waterfront Commission Executive Director Sorial. “The Waterfront Commission will continue to work side by side with our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners to combat organized crime and corruption, and to dismantle criminal enterprises in the New York metropolitan area by severing the illicit revenue streams that fuel them.

#### United States v. Earnest, et al.

As detailed in court filings, transcripts of court proceedings and facts presented during the plea proceeding, between December 2022 and March 2024, Jones and his associates obtained and misused non-public information about upcoming NBA games to place fraudulent sports wagers for profit. Specifically, Jones used his NBA insider status to obtain confidential information from multiple NBA teams, players and coaches, and distributed that information through a network of bettors. These bettors placed wagers through online sportsbooks and retail betting outlets, falsely representing that their wagers complied with the betting companies’ rules—which included, as relevant here, not betting on non-public information or using straw bettors—while concealing that their wagers were based on confidential team information.

#### United States v. Aiello, et al.

Beginning as early as 2019, the charged defendants engaged in a series of schemes to use wireless cheating technology to rig illegal poker games in the Eastern District of New York and across the United States. Co-conspirators in the scheme included game organizers, who arranged for unwitting victims to play in underground illegal poker games that were secretly rigged; suppliers of the rigged cheating technology; former professional athletes, who were enlisted as “Face Cards” in the scheme to entice the victims’ participation in the games; cheating teams who worked together using the cheating technology to defraud the victims; money launderers; and members and associates of the Bonanno, Gambino and Genovese organized crime families who backed games in the New York area and took a percentage of the crime proceeds from those games. Jones admitted at his guilty plea hearing that he acted as a “Face Card” to entice victims to play in high-stake rigged games and also was a member of cheating teams who defrauded victims at poker tables.

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The government’s Earnest, et al. case is being handled by the Office’s Business and Securities Fraud Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Kaitlin Farrell, Benjamin Weintraub and David Berman are in charge of the prosecution, with assistance from Paralegal Specialists Liam McNett and Erika Ellis. The government’s Aiello, et al. case is being handled by the Office’s Organized Crime and Gangs Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Michael W. Gibaldi, Irisa Chen, Sean M. Sherman and Kamil R. Ammari are in charge of the prosecution, with the assistance of Paralegal Specialist John Schneider. Assistant United States Attorney Claire Kedeshian of the Office’s Asset Forfeiture Section is handling forfeiture matters.

**The Defendant:**

DAMON JONES (also known as “Dee Jones”)  
Age: 49  
Houston, Texas

E.D.N.Y. Docket Nos. 25-CR-314 (RER) and 25-CR-323 (LDH)