

Steelers' Antonio Brown sued for trashing apartment; he claims staff stole \$80K and gun

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Pittsburgh Steelers wide receiver Antonio Brown is accused of throwing furniture from the 14th-floor balcony of a Florida luxury apartment complex in April while in a rage about a missing \$80,000 and gun, according to a lawsuit and police reports.

Mr. Brown has until Thursday to answer a lawsuit filed by Ophir Sternberg, who said his 22-month-old son and the boy's grandfather were near the pool at the Mansions at Acqualina in Sunny Isle Beach around 10:30 a.m. April 24 when they were nearly hit by "large objects" that fell from "many floors above them and crashed to the ground," according to the lawsuit.

Two large vases, estimated over 3 feet tall, a large ottoman and other pieces of furniture were among the items raining from above, according to the lawsuit. The barrage continued for several minutes, according to the lawsuit, and some of the items fell within a foot or two of the man and his grandson, Amnon.

The child was "severely traumatized by the incident, crying for hours on end the day it occurred and was unable to sleep that night," the lawsuit alleges. Mr. Sternberg is seeking more than \$15,000 in damages.

"Mr. Brown's out of control and inexcusable behavior could have killed my son," he said in a statement later Tuesday. "His reckless tantrum displayed complete disregard for the safety of others. We intend to hold Mr. Brown accountable, to hopefully ensure that something like this never happens again."

No one answered when a reporter stopped by Mr. Brown's Pine home Tuesday afternoon. His attorney, Darren Heitner, who is based in Florida, declined to comment. His agent, Drew Rosenhaus, was not immediately available. The Steelers declined to comment when contacted Tuesday.

"I have no comments regarding that," Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said Tuesday at his weekly news conference. "I know nothing about it."

Sunny Isles police reports show that officers were called to the apartment building at 10:08 a.m. by Mr. Brown, who "appeared very agitated and was yelling at [building] security, telling them he thinks they set him up."

Mr. Brown was apparently referring to \$80,000 in cash and a gun he'd reported missing a day earlier. Around 1:30 p.m. on April 23, Mr. Brown called police after returning from a two-week trip to find the cash and gun gone, according to a police report.

Mr. Brown told officers that the apartment had been cleaned and laundry washed and folded. A \$250 handgun was missing from his closet, he said, as well as \$80,000 in cash he'd left in a white backpack.

The backpack was in the apartment, Mr. Brown told police, but the cash was gone, according to the incident report.

Building security officers checked surveillance video and found that three custodial workers entered the apartment while Mr. Brown was gone. Security let the workers into the apartment with permission "possibly" from "the owner of the unit's assistant," according to a police report.

Mr. Brown, who rented the unit, seemed to be upset about the theft when he began throwing furniture and household items the next day, according to the police reports.

"Apparently when Mr. Brown got upset he started throwing things in the apartment and the coffee table glass was broken, along with a few other minor objects," the report reads. "He also threw some objects from the balcony into the pool area, causing minor damage there as well."

No one was hurt, and Mr. Brown was not charged, although the police report indicates the building's security director began the process to evict Mr. Brown, who had signed a six-month lease for the \$10 million apartment in the northern suburb of Miami.

Mr. Brown is also facing a second lawsuit filed by his landlord in connection to the incident, court records show. The landlord, Aqualina 1402 LLC, is seeking more than \$15,000 in damages due to the damaged furniture and apartment, according to the lawsuit.

That lawsuit contends Mr. Brown broke the lease agreement by "destroying, damaging, defacing the premises, as well as furnishings and appliances." It goes on to say that Mr. Brown has refused to pay for the damages and that the unit required extensive repairs.

Mr. Brown rented the furnished apartment for six months between February and July, according to a signed lease included in the lawsuit. He paid advance rent of \$105,000 for three months, as well as a \$35,000 security deposit at the signing, according to the lease.

Attorney George Minski, who is representing Aqualina, estimated Tuesday that Mr. Brown caused around \$100,000 in damage to the apartment, which was taken off the market while repairs were made.

“You have to understand, the apartment is rented furnished, and you can’t rent it to a high-end tenant with all this damage,” he said.

Mr. Minski said other tenants had previously complained about loud music and parties in Mr. Brown’s unit, and said the landlord initially sought payment directly from Mr. Brown in an attempt to avoid the lawsuit.

Mr. Minski added that one of the vases Mr. Brown is accused of tossing from the balcony landed in a hot tub.

“By good fortune it fell into the hot tub and there was no one in the hot tub,” Mr. Minski said. “But it did rattle some people who were down there.”

The day after the balcony incident, Sunny Isles police once again returned to Mr. Brown’s apartment, when he called on April 25 and reported his black Rolls-Royce had been stolen, according to a police report.

But when officers arrived, Mr. Brown refused to let them into the apartment, according to a police report. He opened the door, told police, “I found the car,” closed the door, and then did not answer it again, according to the report.

The police report says officers tried talking to him once more that day before ending the call.