

Chargers' Merriman out in San Diego

By Bernie Wilson
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

SAN DIEGO— The San Diego Chargers have turned out the lights on the player known as "Lights Out."

Outside linebacker **NFL** Merriman, once one of the most-feared players in the NFL, was placed on the injured reserve list because of a calf injury and a "minor-injury designation" on Wednesday.

Technically, the Chargers could re-sign the controversial player. That almost certainly won't happen, though, because general manager A.J. Smith hasn't been a fan of Merriman's celebrity-leaning lifestyle.

Known as "Lights Out" because

of his once-ferocious hits, Merriman had 39½ sacks in his first three seasons. He's had only four in the three seasons since then due to a variety of injuries.

He was suspended for four games in 2006 after testing positive for steroids. Even missing the four games, he had 17 sacks that year.

Merriman blamed the positive test on a tainted supplement, which he never identified.

He also brought unwanted attention off the field. He was arrested just before the 2009 season after reality television star Tila Tequila accused him of battery and false imprisonment at his suburban San Diego home. No charges were filed, and Merriman and Tequila settled dueling lawsuits.

Merriman missed most of the 2008 season after undergoing reconstructive knee surgery. He had four sacks last year as he tried to regain his hard-hitting form. After sitting out most offseason workouts and part of training camp to protest his contract status, he was slowed by an Achilles' injury and then a calf injury.

He had only five tackles and no sacks in limited action this year. Smith didn't return a call seeking comment.

Merriman, who's been on the trading block for some time, declined to comment when contacted via e-mail.

However, a publicist released a statement in which Merriman was quoted as saying, "I am approaching this situation as an opportunity to grow as a player and to bring

my leadership and talents to a new organization. I am ready for the next chapter in my career and I am excited about the opportunity to continue my journey with a new team."

Coach Norv Turner said he doesn't think Merriman's recent injuries were related to his knee surgery two years ago.

"He's had these muscle tears and he hasn't let it heal," Turner said.

"We've been trying hard to get Shawne back on the field," Turner said.

"It's been a process that we've worked real hard it and it just wasn't happening. I think this will give him the chance to get healthy without the pressure of trying to get ready to play. We need guys to play games."

Asked if the prognosis was so bad that it wasn't worth holding onto Merriman's rights for the rest of the season, Turner said: "Those are questions regarding long-term and I'm not going to get into that right now."

Fellow outside linebacker Shaun Phillips said he was sad to see Merriman go.

"For me it's upsetting because he was a friend of mine. That's why it's hard to see him go," Phillips said.

"But I've found that this league stands for Not For Long for a reason."

"I've seen hundreds of people come and go. I wish him the best and he's the homie, he's a good friend of mine so I know he's going to do good whatever he decides to do."

Wizards' Gilbert Arenas fined for faking injury

By the Associated Press

WASHINGTON — For someone looking to get back into the good graces of his team, its fans and the NBA, Gilbert Arenas has a funny way of showing it.

T he Washington Wizards guard's latest escapade took place Tuesday, when coach Flip Saunders announced before a preseason game against the Atlanta Hawks that Arenas would miss the con-

test with a sore left knee.

But Arenas revealed after the Wizards' 107-92 victory that he pretended to have a bum knee to give teammate Nick Young a chance to start. He told reporters Wednesday that he was trying to do Young a favor.

"I lied to you and told him my knee was sore so he'd start Nick," Arenas said.

Arenas was fined an undisclosed amount by the Wizards for his deception.

It was another blow to the image of a player who is still trying

to recover from his 50-game suspension and felony conviction for bringing guns into the locker room last season.

After Wednesday's practice, Arenas first said he wasn't talking, then appeared before reporters offering a halfhearted apology for his actions.

"I screwed up again, so I just want to say sorry," he said. "I wasn't really thinking that this was going to be another media outburst. It's like everything I do now, someone, tit for tat, tries to blow it out of proportion."

Arenas' altruistic gesture might have gone over a little better if Arenas didn't lie to his coach, or if he hadn't already ruffled feathers this preseason with his moody press conference at the team's media day or his statements that he would "move on" after helping No. 1 pick John Wall learn the ropes.

Saunders, who has gone out of his way to defend Arenas this preseason, said he was shocked and disappointed with Arenas. He spoke to Arenas and the team about the situation.

"I was probably the most surprised," Saunders said. "I got a text late last night. When I talked to Gil at the shootaround, he indicated that his knee was a little bit sore and stiff and he didn't think he was going to play, and I said, 'Fine,' and I moved on."

"I said to him that I'm most disappointed personally. Because I believe in him. There's been a trust factor. I told him, 'You're going to have to be honest with me.' It's just like dealing with your kids. Your kids make mistakes and you deal with them."

Penguins fall to Maple Leafs, now 0-3 at Consol

By Alan Robinson
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

PITTSBURGH — Clarke MacArthur scored twice and the Toronto Maple Leafs withstood Sidney Crosby's first goal of the season to keep the Penguins winless in their new arena, beating Pittsburgh 4-3 on Wednesday night.

Francois Beauchemin and Colton Orr also had goals for the Maple Leafs, who scored on four of their 14 shots to improve to 3-0 for the first time since the 1999-2000 season, the last time they won their division. They held on despite being outshot 9-2 in the third period, when Crosby, Evgeni

Malkin and Mark Letestu all failed to convert good scoring chances.

Pittsburgh is 1-3 overall and 0-3 in the Consol Energy Center, which opened last week as the replacement for the 49-year-old Civic Arena.

Toronto's Jorras Gustavsson, the 6-foot-3 Swedish goalie who is nicknamed the Monster, turned aside 22 shots in his first start of the season. He didn't need to make the penalty shot Malkin shot wide on a penalty shot

with 1:57 left in the second period and Pittsburgh down 4-2. Malkin hasn't scored on four career penalty shots.

Crosby got Pittsburgh to within a goal by scoring 1:13 later on a backhand from along the goal line set up by Ben Lovejoy. But the Maple Leafs kept the lead despite going 16:51 without a shot at the end of the second period and the start of the third.

Some sloppy defensive play by the Penguins helped Toronto open a 4-2 lead midway through the second period. Due to injuries to Zbynek Michalek (right shoulder) and Brooks Orpik (groin), the Penguins were down to six healthy defensemen - and had

recalled Andrew Hutchinson from the minors to reach that number.

Max Talbot's third goal in two seasons gave the Penguins a 2-1 lead at 17:33 of the first. Talbot, his shooting affected by a shoulder injury, scored only twice last season.

The first of MacArthur's two goals in a 7½-minute span tied it only 7 seconds into a power play created by Eric Tangradis high-sticking penalty. MacArthur beat Marc-Andre Fleury on a one-timer off Tomas Kaberles cross-ice pass following a faceoff win.

Toronto took the lead 2½ minutes later, scoring again after a faceoff as quick passes by Luke Schenn and Mike Zigomanis cre-

ated Beauchemin's partially screened shot from above the circles.

MacArthur scored his fourth in three games, snapping off an undefended wrist shot from the left circle past Fleury after a wide-open Mikhail Grabovski slipped him a pass from behind the net at 10:30 of the second.

Notes: Malkin's penalty shot was only the second for the Penguins in two seasons. Talbot missed on their only attempt last season. ... Crosby's one point in three games represented the worst start of his six-season career. ... Malkin was scoreless after having seven goals and 27 assists in his first 15 career games against Toronto.

NHL	
4	Toronto
3	Pittsburgh

Favre might sit with tendinitis

By Jon Krawczynski
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. — Brett Favre's latest problem is his elbow.

With the NFL investigating whether he sent lewd photos of himself to a Jets game hostess while he played for New York in 2008, Favre said Wednesday that his cherished, league-record streak of 289 straight starts could be in danger if the pain in his right elbow gets any worse.

The 41-year-old quarterback did not practice with Minnesota on Wednesday, preferring to rest the tendinitis that flared up noticeably on Monday night in the Vikings' 29-20 loss to the Jets.

"I don't want to play just to play," Favre said. "It's kind of a funny injury. It could flare up and get worse."

It's even more adversity for Favre this season, which so far has been anything but a repeat of last year's charmed run to the NFC title game. How bad is it? On Wednesday, local TV station WCCO posted video of Favre getting hit in the groin by a stray football during a warm up before practice started.

Commissioner Roger Goodell said on Tuesday there is no timetable for completing an investigation into a Deadspin report that Favre sent inappropriate messages and photos to Jenn Sterger in 2008.

And the Vikings are off to a 1-3 start heading into what they call a must-win game against Dallas on Sunday.

"I don't rank them," Favre said on Wednesday when asked how the allegations measure up to other issues he's dealt with in his career. "I'm thrilled to be here and have an opportunity to lead this team to the Super Bowl. ... There's still a lot of football left. I feel very confident in a lot of ways."

"You go through different things in your life. Football is a very tough sport, mentally and physically. Last year was great. Almost too great. But I woke up this morning and was very eager to get over here. More so than last year at this time, to get this back on track. I feel confident that (the team) will right itself in the end."

In 20 years in the NFL, Favre has been through tough times before.

From his addiction to pain killers early in his career, to his wife being diagnosed with breast cancer, and through the death of his father, Favre has always managed to keep his focus on the game, often delivering some of his best performances along the way.

"I think he's really handling it well. I really do," said Vikings kicker Ryan Longwell, a close friend of Favre's from their days together in Green Bay. "The guy is so resilient and has his priorities straight, and I think in the midst of a tough, tough situation, across the board, I think he's handled it really well."

Favre said on Wednesday that it was his elbow, not the investigation, that hampered him against the Jets.

He completed 14 of 34 passes and grabbed his arm several times as he tried to rally the Vikings. He threw three touchdowns in the second half, but also sealed their fate with an interception that was returned for a touchdown late in the fourth quarter.


Coming off the most accurate season of his career, Favre missed several wide open receivers on throws "that I could have made blindfolded."

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