

## **New charges filed in O.J. Simpson case**

By KEN RITTER, Associated Press Writer *Wed Oct 24, 3:02 PM ET*

LAS VEGAS - New charges of felony coercion were filed Wednesday against O.J. Simpson and three co-defendants in the alleged armed robbery of two sports memorabilia dealers.

The revised complaint also drops charges against Walter Alexander and Charles Cashmore, who pleaded guilty Tuesday to reduced charges.

Alexander, Simpson's golfing buddy, and Cashmore, at times a day laborer, disc jockey and bartender, have agreed to testify at a preliminary hearing against the former football star and the other men who went to a Las Vegas casino hotel room on Sept. 13 to retrieve items that Simpson said belonged to him.

The memorabilia taken from the hotel room included football game balls signed by Simpson, Joe Montana lithographs, baseballs autographed by Pete Rose and Duke Snider, photos of Simpson with the Heisman Trophy, and framed awards and plaques, together valued at as much as \$100,000, according to police reports.

The revised complaint increases to 12 the number of charges against Simpson, Clarence Stewart, Michael McClinton and Charles Ehrlich. The four are to appear for the preliminary hearing Nov. 8 on felonies — including kidnapping, armed robbery, assault with a deadly weapon, conspiracy and coercion — and one gross misdemeanor, conspiracy to commit a crime. A kidnapping conviction alone could result in a sentence of life in prison with parole.

The new coercion charges allege that the men threatened collectibles dealer Bruce Fromong and took his cell phone, while taking a baseball cap and sunglasses at gunpoint from memorabilia dealer Alfred Beardsley.

Conviction on felony coercion carries a sentence of up to six years in prison.

Ehrlich's lawyer, John Moran Jr., complained Wednesday that the revised complaint contained wholesale changes in prosecutors' theories of the crimes and was filed so late it put defense lawyers at a disadvantage.

"It violates due process and fair play for us, this far down the road with the preliminary hearing set," Moran said.

Simpson's lawyer, Yale Galanter, said his client "is not guilty and we continue to say he is not guilty of any crime." Galanter added that he looked forward to cross-examining Alexander and Cashmore.

Stewart's lawyer, Jose Pallares, denied allegations in the revised complaint that Simpson and Stewart conspired to persuade the others to tell authorities that no guns were used in the confrontation.

According to their lawyers and police reports, Alexander and Cashmore can testify that guns were brought to the Palace Station casino hotel room. Simpson, who lives in Miami, has maintained no guns were involved and he did not tell anyone to bring guns.

The complaint names Thomas Riccio, who is not charged in the case, and describes the role the California collectibles broker played in arranging the meeting between Simpson, Fromong and Beardsley.

Riccio's lawyer, Ryan Okabe of Redondo Beach, Calif., said Clark County District Attorney David Roger has promised Riccio immunity from prosecution. Riccio also has provided authorities with an audio tape he said he recorded during the encounter.

Riccio, Cashmore and Alexander are expected to be key witnesses for the prosecution at the preliminary hearing, when Justice of the Peace Joe M. Bonaventure will decide whether there is enough evidence to send the case to trial in state court.

Alexander pleaded guilty Tuesday to felony conspiracy to commit robbery, and Roger said he would seek a suspended sentence, which could get Alexander probation instead of one to six years in prison.

Cashmore pleaded guilty to felony accessory to robbery. He could get probation or up to one to five years in prison at sentencing, according to his agreement with the district attorney.

Sentencing for both men will come after an April 15 status check.