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Someone's Been Ripped Off Da Protests Free Lawyer For 'Drug Kingpin' In Murder Case

By Dave Racher, Daily News Staff Writer

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Taxpayers will foot the legal bill for reputed drug boss-millionaire Emmanuel "Cripple June" Rios, who yesterday was ordered to stand trial on murder and racketeering charges.

Although prosecutors claimed Rios, 20, made \$23 million as the "drug kingpin" at 8th and Butler streets, Common Pleas Judge Michael R. Stiles ruled there was no proof Rios had big money stashed away.

In ordering that a court-appointed lawyer defend Rios - at taxpayer expense - Stiles said the only thing Rios owned was a heavily mortgaged grocery store.

Outside the courtroom, lawyer A. Charles Peruto Jr., who once represented Rios in federal drug cases, said the judge was correct.

"There is no doubt that Rios once had a substantial amount of money, but he no longer does," Peruto said. "He was ripped off by rival drug gangs sometime before his arrest and is absolutely penniless because he had retired

from the drug organization."

Assistant District Attorney Roger King, however, vowed to document the money Rios made as leader of the Blue Tape drug ring.

"We'll get another crack at Rios," King said. "There was money laundering involved here. . . . \$23 million or \$14 million doesn't just evaporate into thin air."

Yesterday's ruling on the attorney issue meant that in his murder and racketeering case Rios will be defended by James M. Lynn, who said he is convinced Rios is broke and deserves to have his legal fees paid by the city.

Rios is charged in the fatal shootings of Shawn Nelson, 15, on Sept. 7, 1987, and Michael Gore, 20, on Sept. 16, 1988. At yesterday's preliminary hearing, Municipal Judge Ronald B. Merriweather set bail at \$500,000 and told Rios he would have to put up the cash to be released.

The bail was set after the judge heard testimony from Romance McArthur, 20, who has pleaded guilty to the two killings and is awaiting sentencing.

McArthur, testifying about one of the killings, said Shawn Nelson had been "a dealer" for the Blue Tape ring at 8th and Butler. Then Rios learned Nelson was selling his own drugs instead of Blue Tape drugs.

McArthur said he, Rios, and another man abducted Nelson and drove him to Snake Road in Juanita Park, where the 15-year-old dealer was shot in the head.

"It was decided that Shawn should be hit," McArthur said, "killed to teach everybody a lesson."

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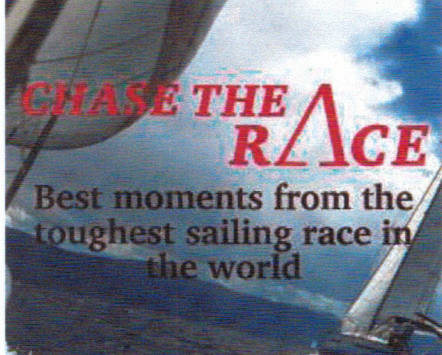
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