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Thabo Sefolosha's Hawks teammates express support, concern

By Kevin Arnovitz

CHICAGO -- Teammates of [Thabo Sefolosha](#) voiced support Wednesday for the injured [Atlanta Hawks](#) forward and offered opinions about the larger issue of law enforcement and people of color.

Sefolosha suffered a broken fibula and ligament damage a week ago in an altercation with police in Manhattan. On Tuesday, Sefolosha said "the injuries were [caused by the police](#)." A police report stated that Sefolosha was resisting arrest, though videos have surfaced since the incident, calling into question some details of the police account.

Thabo Sefolosha has the full support of Hawks teammates Al Horford and Kyle Korver. AP Photo/Craig Ruttie

In addition to lending support to Sefolosha, both Hawks center [Al Horford](#) and guard [Kyle Korver](#) expressed thoughts about the current public conversation surrounding the issue.

"It's a point of concern," Horford said. "A light is being shed on it, and I'm sure some things are going to change. They need to for society to be better."

Korver, who serves as vice president of the National Basketball Players Association, said there have been conversations among members of the union's executive board. He added that there's an eagerness for the legal process to play out.

"I'll just say that, at the end of the day, justice is going to happen and the full story will be told," Korver said. "This is a conversation that's happening in a lot of places. It's a hot topic. It's a really hard situation."

Several Hawks players stressed that Sefolosha's situation is, first and foremost, a legal matter. When asked about the broader societal implications of this specific case, they emphasized that their foremost concern is for the health and welfare of their teammate.

"We're a family at the end of the day, and that's what we want to display to him," Horford said.

The Hawks are a particularly quiet, low-drama group that believes in minimizing outside distractions, a mindset very much in line with coach Mike Budenholzer's training for nearly two decades in the [San Antonio Spurs](#) organization. Hawks GM [Danny Ferry](#) took a [leave of absence](#) from the team on Sept. 12 after a recording of his making racially charged comments about [Luol Deng](#) on a conference call was made public.

The Hawks, who wrapped up the No. 1 seed in the Eastern Conference weeks ago, begin their first-round playoff series this weekend in Atlanta against the [Brooklyn Nets](#) or [Indiana Pacers](#).

As for the legal proceedings in Sefolosa's case, sources close to the defense on Wednesday said that the Manhattan District Attorney's office will interview the officers involved in the incident. The officers will provide information for the charging document against Sefolosa.

[LeBron James](#), who talked to the media prior to [sitting out](#) the Cavs' regular-season finale for rest, called the incident and Sefolosa's resulting injury "unfortunate."

"The Atlanta Hawks players and Thabo being out the rest of the season because of the incident, it's just unfortunate and obviously I'm not in deep in the information as far as the franchises of the Hawks and the Pacers are," James said, "but from the outside looking in, I think it's unfortunate not only for the players, but for the families and the franchises. Those are two teams -- the Pacers, they're trying to clinch tonight -- and the Hawks are the No. 1 seed and Thabo is a big part of their bench.

"So, it's unfortunate and when all the information comes out, we'll see what happens."

He also spoke to the measures he takes to stay cautious when he goes out to socialize.

"I don't bother nobody. I have a good time, just like everybody else," he said. "I stay to myself and my friends and I'm not the last one to leave. I always leave before everybody else and I'm very responsible.

"I understand that target that we have on our back as athletes and as professional athletes and the jealousy that comes with that sometimes when you're out. So, you just got to be as responsible as possible and that's what teams have security for, too. You have security, those guys should be with us and be with you when you go out in public and buffer those things away from us."

The Internal Affairs bureau of the New York City Police Department is investigating the incident with Sefolosa as a complaining witness against the officers. Internal Affairs requested to interview Sefolosa, but Sefolosa's attorney, Alex Spiro, will provide information directly to Internal Affairs, as Sefolosa has a pending charge and has been counseled not to speak directly to detectives, sources said.