

# Drug dealer's pride led to fall, police say

## Star of undercover video one of many arrested in sweep



Walter Taylor was arrested on Selby Av., the main street of St. Paul's curbside crack.

By Conrad deFiebre  
Staff Writer

In his own mind, at least, Walter Taylor was a big-time cocaine dealer.

St. Paul police say he bragged of his houses, cars and boats registered in phony names and of his prowess at laundering money and eluding the law. He would become "the next Plukey Duke," he said.

To hear Taylor tell it, according to charges filed Wednesday in Ramsey County District Court, he "was so smart and careful that the police would never catch him, even though he was selling lots of dope."

What Taylor didn't know was that for much of the summer he was making his boasts and flaunting his furtive sales techniques in front of undercover police officers, tape recorders and video cameras.

Taylor, 25, was one of more than 30 men, women and children charged yesterday as authorities wrapped up a major assault on the crack cocaine trade in St. Paul's Summit-University area.

Police say the suspects are street-level dealers who sold relatively small amounts of crack to undercover agents. While Taylor may have been the biggest fish in a small pond — he allegedly sold a little more than

\$1,500 worth of crack to one agent in three months — police say he certainly was no match for Ralph (Plukey) Duke, the former Twin Cities cocaine kingpin now serving life in prison.

"I think Taylor's full of malarkey," said Lt. Jim Singer, St. Paul's narcotics squad commander.

But, said Assistant County Attorney Bob Plesha, "Now he's going where Plukey Duke is."

Taylor served 30 days in jail for cocaine possession three years ago. If convicted of the new charges, he could face a recommended sentence of almost five years in prison. He was

jailed yesterday in lieu of \$25,000 bail.

Like many of those taken into custody Tuesday, Taylor was arrested on Selby Av., the main street of St. Paul's curbside crack marketplace. Four of eight sales he allegedly made to an agent of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension this summer were on Selby.

According to police reports, Taylor often expressed suspicion that his buyer was an undercover agent, but continued selling to him. On several occasions he frisked the agent, lifted his shirt and searched his waist-pack.

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