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Delray Beach police arrest Home Team Advantage owner Douglas Livingston, charge him with remodeling fraud

Detectives say he accepted payments for uncompleted jobs

By Jon Burstein | South Florida Sun-Sentinel
November 19, 2008



A man who has spent four years awaiting trial in [Broward County](#) on construction-related theft charges was arrested Tuesday by [Delray Beach](#) police on similar felony counts involving another home remodeling company.

Police led Douglas Livingston, 41, out of the Home Team Advantage office in handcuffs, accusing him of two felonies — fraud and grand theft of more than \$50,000. He took money from four [Delray Beach](#) clients for remodeling jobs that the company either never started or failed to finish, said Detective Tom Whatley of the [Delray Beach](#) Police Department.

The latest accusations echo the charges that Livingston, of Oakland Park, faces in [Broward County](#) Circuit Court for his role as the chief executive officer of the now-defunct HomeCo Unlimited. He was arrested in November 2004 on 70 counts of extortion, theft and fraud related to remodeling jobs never completed. Former HomeCo customers accused him of verbally intimidating them, prompting six to file police reports against him.

Livingston and another man affiliated with HomeCo, John Ostendorf, went before a jury in February, but a judge declared a mistrial after Livingston was injured in a car crash. Livingston's attorney argues his client is incompetent to stand trial because of the head injuries he suffered in the crash.



Since their 2004 arrests, Livingston and Ostendorf have been operating Home Team Advantage, 125 N. Congress Ave., according to authorities. More than 45 former and current Home Team Advantage customers have told the *Sun Sentinel* they have had problems with the company, including remodeling jobs taking more than two years and shoddy and incomplete construction work.

Livingston's attorney, Hilliard Moldof, declined to comment on Livingston's Tuesday arrest.

Livingston's defense at the HomeCo trial had been that the company didn't defraud anyone, but had trouble finishing jobs after the economic slowdown following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Moldof told a judge in February that Livingston does not work for HomeCo.

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Team Advantage, but for a company called Indecor. Indecor, a home remodeling company, shares the same address as Home Team Advantage, according to state incorporation records. Ostendorf is listed as Home Team Advantage's president. The four [Delray Beach](#) clients identified Livingston as the one who took their checks and seemed to be running the business, Whatley said.

One of the alleged victims is Laurie Beltran said she and her husband have paid more than \$30,000 to Home Team Advantage for a kitchen remodeling job that was supposed to be finished in December 2007. The company did demolition work in June but has failed to finish the job. "My [4-year-old boy] calls the house, 'The broken house,'" Beltran said. "It doesn't even feel like home."

Former HomeCo and Home Team Advantage customers have said that the companies would do demolition and then leave their homes in disarray for months. Some clients have said the stress affected their health and strained their family relationships.

Whatley said after Tuesday's arrest Livingston denied any wrongdoing. Livingston made a point of mentioning he suffered a head injury in the car crash, Whatley said.

"He's driving, he's working, he's dealing with clients, he's collecting money, but he can't sit in a courtroom?" Whatley said. "It's amazing."

Livingston was in [Palm Beach County](#) Jail Tuesday night in lieu of \$50,000 bond.

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See more photos on the arrest of Home Team Advantage owner Douglas Livingston. SunSentinel.com/hometeam

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