



IN-DEPTH.
INVESTIGATIVE.

Suspect in attack on UT student caught by police



By **Andy Jechow** (<https://kxan.com/author/kxanandyjchow/>)

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Matthew Searfoss (Austin Police Department Photo)

AUSTIN (KXAN) — Officers are no longer searching for a man who attacked a University of Texas at Austin student in West Campus this week, after he was arrested Thursday.

At around 2 p.m. on Tuesday, a 911 call was made reporting a disturbance at the 26 West Apartments, located at 600 W. 26th St.

The caller said a man attacked a woman and left on foot toward the 7-Eleven convenience store on the Drag.

A witness followed the suspect to the 7-Eleven where he lost sight of the man. Arriving officers then met with the

victim, who was being treated by medics.

She told police she was punched once in the face by the man, identified in an arrest warrant as Matthew Searfoss, 27. The victim said the suspect didn't say anything before, during or after the assault.

The victim was then taken by ambulance to the hospital.

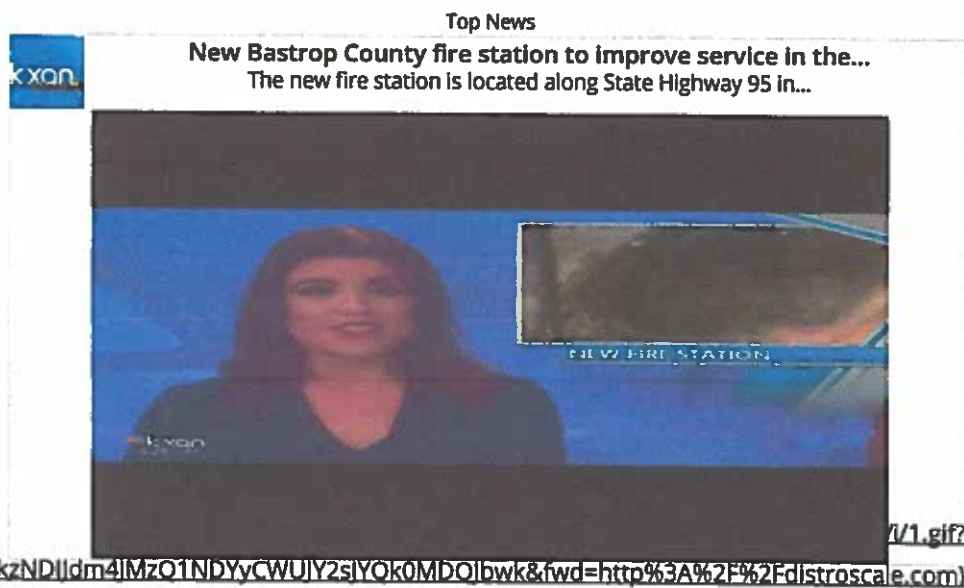
Another witness told officers he first noticed the suspect because he was wearing shorts when it was cold outside. He also looked "malnourished" and appeared to be gesturing with his hands and talking with himself.

As the witness crossed 26th Street, he heard a woman yell "help!" He then saw the suspect, who he described as a homeless-looking man, walking from the area.

A responding officer is familiar with Searfoss, according to the warrant, and recognized him based on the suspect description.

In a photo lineup, the victim identified Searfoss as the suspect. He faces a charge of assault with injury, a Class A misdemeanor.

Searfoss, whose bond was set at \$10,000, was last in the Travis County Jail on Oct. 3.



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Arrest Information

Frank County

Full Name: Matthew Scarless

Member Since:

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Date	Max. # of Hours
08/20/2018	12

Charge:

#1 NON-REPRESENTABLE OFFENSE

STATUTE: 0000 0

Comments:

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Arrest, Release, Record

Full Name:

Sex:

DOB:

UC#:

CAUSE NUMBER: C-1-CR-17-501514

THE STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF TRAVIS

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§
§

IN THE MAGISTRATE COURT
CITY OF AUSTIN
IN TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS

WARRANT OF ARREST

THE STATE OF TEXAS
VS.

DA CONTROL #: _____

NAME: Searfoss, Matthew Taylor
Aliases:
W/M DOB: [REDACTED]
ADDRESS: UNKNOWN/TRANSIENT
CITY: AUSTIN, TEXAS

AUSTIN POLICE DEPARTMENT
OFFENSE #: 2017-2970941
OFFENSE DATE: 10-24-2017
PEACE OFFICER: B. Sheffy #4622

THE STATE OF TEXAS
TO ANY PEACE OFFICER OF THE STATE OF TEXAS, GREETINGS:

You are hereby commanded to arrest:

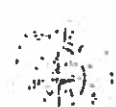
Matthew Taylor Searfoss

If to be found in your County and bring him before me, Judge at the Municipal Court, Travis County, Texas, at my office in Austin, in said county, Travis, then and there to answer the State of Texas for an offense against the laws of said State, to-wit:

Assault with Injury
Class A Misdemeanor

Of which offense he is accused by the written complaint, under oath, of Det. B Sheffy #4622 filed before me. HEREIN FAIL NOT but of this writ make due return, showing how you have executed the same. WITNESS my official signature, this 26th day of October A.D. 2017.

BOND \$: 10,000
Mitt H...
V. Searfoss



[Handwritten Signature]

Judge, Municipal Court
City of Austin
Travis County, Texas

PEACE OFFICER'S RETURN:

Came at hand the _____ day of _____ A.D., _____, at _____ o'clock ____ M. and executed on the _____ day of _____ A.D., _____, at _____ o'clock ____ M. by arresting the within named _____ in _____ County, Texas, and taking his bond, placing him in jail at _____.

I actually and necessarily traveled _____ miles in the service of this writ, in addition to any other mileage that I may have traveled in the service of other process in this cause in the same trip.

FEES-MILEAGE: \$ _____
Making arrest: \$ _____
Taking bond: \$ _____
Commitment \$ _____
Release \$ _____
Total \$ _____

BY _____
Peace Officer

THE STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF TRAVIS

CAUSE NUMBER: C-1-CR-17-501514

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IN THE MAGISTRATE COURT
CITY OF AUSTIN
IN TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS

AFFIDAVIT FOR WARRANT OF ARREST AND DETENTION

The undersigned Affiant, who after being duly sworn by me, on oath, makes the following statement:
I have good reason to believe and do believe that:

Searfoss, Matthew Taylor W/M [REDACTED]

On or about the 24th day of October, 2017, in the incorporated limits of the City of Austin,
County of Travis, Texas, did then and there commit the offense of:

Assault with Injury - (Offense Level A)

Affiant, Detective B. Sheffy #4622, is an investigator assigned to the Region 1 Detective Unit of the Austin Police Department. As a result of such assignment the affiant is responsible for the investigation of Assaults and various other crimes. The following information is based on victim statements, witness statements, affiant's personal knowledge, and information contained in Austin Police Department incident report 17-2970941.

On October 24th, 2017 at approximately 2:11pm, Austin Police officers responded to a 911 emergency call for a Disturbance at 600 W 26th St (26 West Apartments). The call stated that a male attacked a female and left the scene on foot towards the 7-11. The call updated saying that a witness followed the suspect to the 7-11 where he lost sight of him. The suspect was described as a White male 6 foot tall with a red/brown curly hair and beard wearing a grey long sleeve shirt and tan shorts. Upon arriving, Austin Police Officers made contact with the victim identified as E. Grgurich who was being treated by paramedics. Grgurich told officers that she was punched once in the face (right eye) by an unknown male who she described as a white male, 6 foot tall, thin build, brown curly hair, thick brushy beard, wearing an open shirt, and brown shorts. Grgurich stated that the suspect did not say anything prior to, during or after the assault. Grgurich had swelling, redness and bruising to her right eye which she stated caused her pain. She was taken by ambulance to St David's Hospital Emergency room for her injuries.

Your affiant interviewed a witness identified as B. Codner who provided the following statement. Codner stated that on October 24th, 2017, he was walking down Rio Grande towards 26th after going grocery shopping because he lives at Orange Tree apartments on 26th St. About a block away from 26th and Rio Grande Codner saw a man walking wearing a grey sweater and shorts when it was quite cold, full brown beard and brown/blonde curly disheveled hair. He looked malnourished and lanky, gesturing with his hands and talking to himself, which caught his eye. As Codner crossed onto 26th he heard a girl shriek and yell help. Codner and another male ran down 26th to find Grgurich crouched on the curb outside 26 West Apartments. Codner asked what happened and she looked up and he saw she had a swollen eye, draining blood. Grgurich said "that man just punched me!" As Codner crouched down to check on Grgurich he looked up and the only person he saw down 26th was that homeless looking man Codner saw earlier. The suspect was now a block down walking towards Guadalupe St. About that time other students came out to ask if they were okay. Codner told them to follow that man (suspect) who he believed was the one who hit her.

Your affiant interviewed another witness identified as O. Wimalarathne who provide the following statement. Wimalarathne stated that she was riding her bike near 26th St and Rio Grande when she heard a female scream. Wimalarathne said that she rode over to where the victim was to check on her. The victim (Grgurich) and the group of people around her started pointing in the direction the suspect was walking. Wimalarathne then followed the suspect that was pointed out and observed him walk through the 7-11 parking lot and continue walking north on Guadalupe St. where she stopped following him. Wimalarathne described the suspect she followed as tall with red/brown bushy hair and wearing a gray shirt.

Your affiant spoke to Officer Fleming # 3352 who was one of the officers that responded to the scene of the assault. Officer Fleming stated that when he heard the description of the suspect who committed the assault he believed the suspect to be Searfoss, Matthew Taylor W/M [REDACTED]. Searfoss is known to Officer Fleming who had seen him earlier that day wearing a gray t-shirt and shorts. Officer Fleming further stated that when he saw Searfoss he was in the area near

where the assault occurred. Officer Fleming stated that Searfoss hangs out in that area and is known to walk around and talk to himself.

Your affiant was able to view surveillance video from the 7-11 at 26th St and Guadalupe St. from the time the incident occurred. While viewing the video your affiant observed a W/M with bushy red hair and beard about 6 foot tall wearing a gray jacket and blue shorts walk in front of the store from the direction where the assault occurred and continue walking north on Guadalupe St. at a quick pace. A few seconds later a w/m can be seen on video talking on a cell phone looking around the parking lot of the 7-11 as if he was looking for Searfoss which is consistent with the text of the 911 call stating a witness was following the suspect. Your affiant then had Officer Fleming view the surveillance from the 7-11 of the suspect that walked by the store immediately after the Assault and he said that he was 100% positive the individual was Searfoss.

Detective Torres # 6126 administered a photographic line up to Grgurich and she identified Searfoss as the person who assaulted her.

Based on the above information, your affiant has probable cause to believe and does believe that Matthew Taylor Searfoss committed Assault causing bodily injury in violation of section 22.01 of the Texas Penal Code, by intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causing bodily injury to another. This offense is a Class A Misdemeanor.

L 4622 MPD
Affiant

Sworn and subscribed to before me by the said Affiant on this 2 day of Oct, 2017.

[Signature]
Magistrate in the State of Texas

On this, the 2 day of Oct, 2017, I hereby acknowledge that I have examined the foregoing affidavit And have determined that probable cause exists for the issuance of an arrest warrant for the individual accused therein.

[Signature]
Magistrate, Magistrate Court, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Austin Police Incident # 17-2970941

Det. B. Sheffy #4622



IN-DEPTH.
INVESTIGATIVE.

UT student punched in the back of her head north of campus



By [Kate Winkle](https://kxan.com/author/kxankatewinkle/), [Chris Davis](https://kxan.com/author/chris-davis/) and [Alyssa Goard](https://kxan.com/author/alyssa-goard/)

[goard/](https://kxan.com/author/alyssa-goard/)

Published: September 27, 2017, 1:24 pm | Updated: September 27, 2017, 11:33 pm



A student walks on the sidewalk across from Eastwoods Neighborhood Park, where another UT student says she was punched in the back of the head Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2017. (KXAN/Chris Davis)

AUSTIN (KXAN) — A University of Texas student was punched in the back of her head while walking in a park north of campus Wednesday morning.

Austin Police Department officers responded to Harris Avenue after the woman was attacked while in Eastwoods Neighborhood Park around 10:30 a.m. Austin police confirm that the student has been treated and released from the hospital.

APD explained that the victim did not know the suspect, but she described him as a black male in his mid-30s and possibly homeless. Besides her account, APD has no other indicators that the suspect was homeless and APD is not limiting their search for the suspect to the homeless population.

While many residents in the area expressed safety concerns to KXAN, APD said that there is not a large homeless population there and in fact it is a relatively low-crime area, particularly when it comes to violent crime.

"It was alarming to me because I was like, 'Oh, I walk through there all the time,'" Amelia Ragsdale, a UT senior, told KXAN Wednesday afternoon. A commuter student, she sometimes parks her car in the area to walk to class. "It's not something that I want to anticipate every day that I come to school."

UT sent an email out to students about the attack Wednesday.

Another student told KXAN he heard a man yelling in the park about an hour before the attack. The student walks through the park a lot and recognized the man, who fit the description police gave, as a regular there.

"UTPD urges everyone to walk in pairs or with a group and to remain aware of your surroundings at all times," the letter stated. "Please report any suspicious activity or persons by dialing 911 immediately."

"It's extremely worrisome to me," Ragsdale said. As a commuter, she can't always walk with other students, but the Marine veteran does take her headphones out when she walks through the park and does her best to keep an eye and ear on her surroundings — just like training taught her.

"When I came here I wasn't expecting to have those feelings come back at all and I would be, you know, using things that I learned in the Marine Corps in my everyday life," she said.

Sparking broader student safety concerns

For Joell McNew, a mother of a UT student who advocates for student safety through the non-profit Safe Horns, said this incident is upsetting to her personally. It happened in an area her son goes through every day. She believes that student safety is often overlooked by the city.

"That needs to change, what more is it going to take?" she wondered.

McNew has already been working [with the city to make safety improvements after growing concerns in the West Campus neighborhood \(http://kxan.com/2017/08/16/amid-student-concerns-austin-to-launch-west-campus-safety-study/\)](http://kxan.com/2017/08/16/amid-student-concerns-austin-to-launch-west-campus-safety-study/). After this attack, she wants to talk to city leaders about improving safety north of campus as well

"This isn't an area that we were familiar with, and now just hearing students who you spoke with say they have concerns here, that they have to walk together, that they have to make sure they are safely navigating their walk to campus just like West Campus, then it's something that needs to be added, it needs to be included so their voice is heard too," McNew said.

There will be an opportunity upcoming for students to voice their concerns, city of Austin's Transportation Department is working on a survey to improve safety on West Campus. Students with concerns from any neighborhood can attend the West Campus Night Out event at the University Co-Op on Oct. 3 and share their thoughts directly with the city.

UT students Tanner Rowley and Arjun Bajaj live near where the assault happened, they have no concerns walking through the park during the day but say they wouldn't walk through the area alone at night. They've never had issues with the homeless people living in the park near them, but their friends who visit sometimes express concern.

Rowley said he'd like to see the city install more lighting there.

"At night it's pitch black and it's really hard to see anything, you'll be walking on one of the paths over there and there's

shrubby and someone will be sitting in the middle and sometimes its a little scary if you don't see it at first," he said.

This isn't the first time this area has dealt with safety concerns. Peter Keeper who has lived in the neighborhood on and off for three decades explained that around six or seven years ago, there were homeless encampments in the park that concerned him.

Keeper said the city launched an effort to thin out trees and make the parks more visible, and he believed it helped.

"It's shocking," Keeper said of the assault Wednesday. "This is a very quiet neighborhood, students, homeowners and renters."

Homeless and transient populations in the area

Efforts to improve safety in neighborhoods around campus, particularly in regards to the growing homeless and transient population nearby, accelerated after UT freshman [Haruka Weiser](http://kxan.com/tag/Haruka-Weiser)'s murder. Meechaiel Criener, who is charged of capital murder in her death and plead not guilty, was homeless when the crime was committed.

UTPD has added patrols to the West Campus area since. UT Police Chief David Carter told KXAN Wednesday that campus and the surrounding areas saw an increase in the homeless and transient population around campus in 2014, that number has decreased over the years.

Carter said that while many of the chronically homeless individuals have left the area around UT, UTPD is still seeing a number of transient people who are passing through from downtown or other areas in Austin.

Anyone with information about the assault can call UTPD at 512-471-4441 ext. 9. APD patrol is actively looking for a suspect. The case will be turned over to a detective who will work with the victim to identify leads.

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