

SCORECARD Edited by Craig Neff

AGENTS OF VIOLENCE?

When New York entertainment agents Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom began pursuing college football players two years ago, reports circulated that the men were violating NCAA rules by paying athletes (and some parents) thousands of dollars to sign contracts before or during their senior seasons. By last January, at the Senior Bowl in Mobile, Ala., Bloom, 27, and Walters, his 54-year-old mentor, were reveling in the attention—and boasting that many of the stories were true.

"Everybody is gunning for me," bragged Bloom in a Mobile hotel lobby, pointing to Senior Bowl players he said Walters had paid. "We've put \$800,000 into this draft [Walters says Bloom doesn't know the exact financial details]. I'll sign anyone I want. The NCAA can't enforce [its rules]. I'll sign a sophomore if I want." The NCAA is, in fact, investigating reports that Walters and Bloom's company, World Sports & Entertainment, Inc., has already signed star juniors Cris Carter of Ohio State and Lorenzo White of Michigan State as clients. Both White and Carter deny the allegation.

Far more serious are reports that Walters and Bloom engaged in threats against both players and rival agents to keep clients from deserting them. FBI agents in at least eight states are investigating. In one suspicious incident, Kathe Clements, a business associate of Skokie, Ill., sports agent Steve Zucker, was stabbed and beaten unconscious in her office on March 16 by a man wearing a ski mask and gloves. Zucker, who repre-

sents the Bears' Jim McMahon, says he has signed three of WSE's former clients, including Nebraska senior Doug DuBose, whom Clements personally recruited. Zucker claims that Clements, the wife of former Notre Dame quarterback Tom Clements, now playing in the CFL, was confronted by Bloom

at the Senior Bowl and told that "people who don't pay their debts can have their hands broken," an apparent reference to another Zucker client who allegedly owed Bloom and Walters money.

According to *The New York Times*, the Dallas FBI office has a taped conversation between Bloom and former SMU receiver Ronald Morris in which Bloom threatened to have Morris's hands broken if he signed with another agent. The Dallas office is also investigating alleged threats against another former WSE client, ex-SMU running back Jeff Atkins. Last month in Dallas a man who was driving Atkins's car was shot and killed. NFL Players Association sources say two of WSE's former clients called to say they, too, received threats from Walters. "Both players' stories were almost identical," an NFLPA source told *The Atlanta Constitution*.

"They said Walters called them and told them, 'I'm going to talk to my people in Las Vegas and get them to break your legs.'"

A grand jury in Chicago has subpoenaed Walters and his



Walters admits he paid seniors.

WORLD SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT, INC.

recent business records as part of a broad federal investigation of racketeering, extortion and fraud in sports agency. Both Walters and Bloom, however, deny making threats or breaking any laws. Agents have been signing and paying players for years, says Walters. "All I did was sell better." Wal-

ters contends that the stories about violence and threats have been planted by rival agents jealous that WSE has signed "more potential first-rounders"—about 20, he claims—than any other agent in history.

Most of those blue-chip seniors have reportedly defected, however; the only ones still with WSE are said to be Paul Palmer of Temple and John Clay of Missouri. Walters and Bloom have filed suit in New York State Supreme Court against at least four ex-clients—former Iowa running back Ronnie Harmon, now with the Bills; All-America cornerback Rod Woodson of Purdue; Pitt defensive end Tony Woods; and Auburn running back Brent Fullwood—charging them with breach of contract and failure to repay loans or expenses. "They are the immoral ones," says Walters. "I haven't done anything illegal. They took my money."

Others disagree. Lawyers for some of the players WSE is suing insist Walters and Bloom performed no services as agents and used deceptive practices in signing the athletes. The NFLPA may move to decertify Bloom as a registered agent. Walters never sought NFLPA certification. "I don't feel like being governed by other institutions," he says.

—BRUCE SELCRAIG

WSE is suing ex-client Harmon.



CARL SKALKAN