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Sports agent says he's helping FBI on probe

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Sports agent Steven Zucker tells us he is working closely with the federal government in an investigation of mob-style racketeering that is victimizing college athletes across the country. Some sports agents allegedly are using crime-syndicate muscle tactics to terrorize other agents and athletes and are violating NCAA rules by paying the athletes to sign professional contracts before their college eligibility expires.

Zucker said he contacted the FBI here after the vicious beating of his aide, Kathy Clements, in his Skokie office.

Clements, 32, was pummeled into unconsciousness March 16 by a man wearing a ski mask. We phoned Zucker in Palm Springs, Calif., and described the assault.

"That was enough for me," said Zucker. "I followed your lead by contacting the FBI to get the ball rolling. I'm glad the investigation has reached national proportions.

Zucker said he first briefed the Chicago FBI office headed by agent-in-charge James D. McKenzie, then met with Assistant U.S. Attorney Howard Perl.

Perl has been placed in charge of the massive special grand jury investigation.

The feds decided to base the investigation in Chicago because of the attack on Clements and because this city is both centrally located and a sports center.

Working from a preliminary list that almost certainly will grow, FBI agents have subpoenaed 60 athletes from 28 schools.

They also have subpoenaed college records pertaining to the athletes - most of them football players - looking for evidence that they received payments while still in school. The records have been turned over to the grand jury here.

The investigation is focusing on two New York agents, **Norby Walters** and **Lloyd Bloom**, who operate World Sports & Entertainment Inc.

Zucker, whose clients include Bears quarterback Jim McMahon, said he signed three World Sports clients who were recruited by Clements.

He said Clements at one point was confronted by **Bloom** and that **Bloom** - in an apparent reference to a Zucker client who owed World Sports money - told Clements that "people who don't pay their debts can have their hands broken."

The FBI has a taped conversation in which **Bloom** allegedly warned former Southern Methodist University receiver Ronald Morris his hands would be broken if he signed with another agent. Two other former World Sports clients reportedly have said that **Walters** threatened to have their legs broken by "my people in Las Vegas."

And the FBI is looking into the death in Dallas of a man who was shot while driving the car of still another ex-World Sports client, former SMU running back Jeff Atkins.

Walters and **Bloom** have openly boasted they have paid college athletes to sign with them and have expressed contempt for NCAA regulations. But both men have denied the allegations involving violence.

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