Sports/Port2

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The Atlanta Lournal D THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION

Gottfried takes a stand against agents

Pitt coach became first to turn in his own athletes for signing prematurely with agents

"We do not require our coaches to be detectives." - David Berst, NCAA director of enforcement.

By Chris Mortensen Staff Writer

PITTSBURGH — University of Pittsburgh football coach Mike Gottfried had done his duty last fall, again during the winter and yet again two months ago. He asked his players if they had signed with an agent, and they looked him in the eye and replied, "No." Pitt belongs to no conference. Nobody is constantly looking over its shoulder. In this case, only Mike Gottfried's conscience compelled him to press until he uncovered hard evidence that two of his top returning players, running back Charles Gladman and defensive back Teryl Austin, had indeed accepted money from New York-based agents Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom. "I think the guy (Gottfried) could work in Scotland Yard," Pitt associate athletic director Dean Billick said. Even when Gottfried presented evidence to Gladman three weeks ago that he had been taking money from Walters and Bloom, the response was the same. "I'm sticking to my story," Gladman told the coach. Gottfried was sticking to his values. Despite legal advice that he should proceed slowly, he suspended Gladman, a running back projected as a possible firstround NFL draft pick in 1988. Gottfried also suspended Austin, who had finally admitted receiving money from Walters. The NCAA soon declared both ineligible for the upcoming season. Some Pitt boosters have questioned Gottfried's vigilance on this matter. If anything can be forgiven, they said, it is the passing of money between an agent and a talented player. Other big-time colleges have had players implicated, but Gottfried is the only coach who has turned in his own players. He said he feels some relief, indicating his efforts were not entirely selfless. Gottfried said he believes some coaches may lose some of their athletes and may be punished if a federal grand jury in Chicago investigating Walters and Bloom hands down indictments against the players and agents.

"I don't think other coaches are turning their back on it, but I personally have that weight off my mind," said Gottfried. "One of the things some of these other coaches are facing is that they have to get their football programs started in August with the Walters and Bloom thing hanging over their heads. They don't know if it's going to crash right before the season, or in the middle of it."

To Gottfried, the worst scenario is the grand jury taking the whole year to complete its investigation. Another football season could pass without action taken against the agents. He said he wishes no ill toward other programs, but if there has been wrongdoing, he wants it out in the open. He has gone so far as to suggest an amnesty program to the NCAA in which immunity would be granted to all athletes who come forward with the admission of signing with an agent. "Some kids who have signed could go scot-free if the grand jury thing drags on," said Gottfried. "The bad thing that already has happened is a lot of college kids see that everyone who signed with Walters and Bloom played last year without getting caught. If nothing happens again, it's the same story. And what's to stop it from happening again and again?" Gottfried could have washed his hands of the matter two months ago when the players signed notarized scholarship certification documents, essentially stating that they had done nothing to jeopardize their eligibility. That was good enough for the NCAA. "Why did I do it?" Gottfried said. "First of all, it's wrong. It's against the rules. In most cases, rules being broken undermine everything you try and stand for and develop on a team: trust, honesty, openness. What's happened with these agents, Walters and Bloom, has set us back a little bit. You need an ethically and morally strong program." It was on this foundation, in addition to a strong reputation as a recruiter and X's and O's coach, that Gottfried landed the Pitt job in 1986. He had accumulated a modest 49-39-3 record as a head coach at Murray State, Kansas and Cincinnati, but with each stop the



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FIRST MOVE: Shortly after Pitt coach Mike Gottfried (above) suspended two of his top players, Teryl Austin and Charles Gladman, the NCAA declared them ineligible for the 1987 season.



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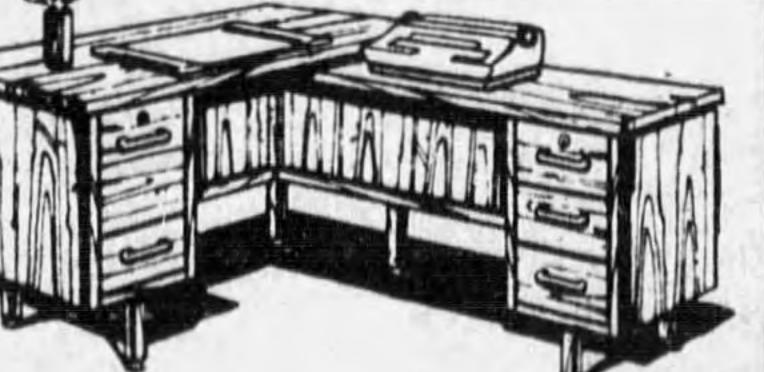


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Rules being broken undermine everything you stand for and develop on a team ...

FROM 17D

program was left stronger.

Dallas Cowboys vice president Gil Brandt believes Gottfried, 42, will be NFL head coach material one day. Two NFL coaches, Mike Ditka of the Chicago Bears and Forrest Gregg of the Green Bay Packers, have given Gottfried strong endorsements. At Pitt, Gottfried has openly spoken of winning a national title and then possibly moving to the NFL.

Pitt was 5-5-1 last year in Gottfried's first season, but Billick said the school was largely pleased that a sense of discipline was restored to the program. Gottfried then had a successful recruiting class, landing three Parade Magazine All-Americans.

In spring football practice, Gottfried remodeled the run-and-shoot offense he brought to Pitt and is concentrating on a balanced multiple offense. Gladman did well in the spring. After rushing for 1,085 yards as a sophomore in 1985 but only half that much last year, he rushed for more than 200 yards in this year's spring game. Moreover, some personality conflicts with Gottfried had subsided. But one conflict had not been resolved: The question of whether Gladman had taken money and signed a contract with Walters and Bloom. Already, Gottfried had pressed Pitt All-America defensive end Tony Woods into confessing that he had signed. Eventually, a lawsuit Walters and Bloom filed against Woods confirmed the facts. But Gottfried didn't find out about Woods until March, more than three months after his final game. "It kept coming to my attention, I kept asking, but I kept running into walls," said Gottfried. "I was getting no answers, even though I kept hearing a couple of my kids might have signed with agents. I started thinking to myself, 'Maybe it isn't true.' " Gottfried was a head coach in the Blue-Gray game on Christmas Day in Montgomery, Ala. Bloom was hanging out in the lobby of the hotel headquarters. Gottfried confronted the agent. "I asked him point-blank if he had signed any of my players, and he gave me this big innocent act and denied it," said Gottfried. "He lied to me. But some of the activities I saw during the week really opened my eyes. I didn't see a lot of credibility there." Gottfried said that a report in The Atlanta Journal and The Atlanta Constitution on March 12, in which Walters admitted giving players cash to sign postdated contracts, re-ignited his suspicion. He was so eager to read the story he arranged for it to be mailed overnight to Las Vegas, Nev., where he was speaking at a football clinic. "That story broke, and then the FBI came on campus, and the grand jury subpoenaed the athletes," said Gottfried. "I knew there was more to the story than I was getting. I was not going to 25 hours away. wait. I felt that if I did have some players who had taken money from them, I was going to find out."





United Press International/File

WANTS FRAUD CHARGES: Mike Gottfried says he wants U.S. Attorney to indict Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom on charges of fraud.

Walters, Bloom and Bolar have told kids it's OK \$56 for everything else: food, clothes, gas, bills. to postdate contracts, and it isn't OK with the The NCAA does not allow scholarship athletes to NCAA. They have jeopardized the athletes' ca- find outside employment because of past indisreers. They jeopardize all the good things their cretions in which athletes were given phantom teammates have worked for. They jeopardize the jobs for pay. school. They are deceitful. They lie. Their greed "The NCAA should allow each college presifar exceeds their intelligence."

Gottfried indicates no regret that he dug up so much information on the players.

"I feel badly that it has had such a deep impact on people's lives," he said. "These are not bad kids. They made a mistake, primarily because these so-called agents were deceptive and liars. The shame of it is Teryl Austin was 12 hours away from graduation and Gladman was "Austin and Gladman have lost their scholarships to continue their education. Are these agents going to pay their tuition so they can get a degree? Some of these kids, it's tough for them with a hardship family situation. A mom will call her son and say, 'What can you do to help (financially)?' These are poor people who are coerced into poor decisions by the system and opportunistic men." Because of Austin's economic background and repentance, Gottfried went to NCAA headquarters in Shawnee Mission, Kan., to appeal to officials for leniency in Austin's case. Gottfried said he does not consider it hypocritical in asking that Austin be allowed to play in 1987. "I don't know of anybody who is too big to forgive," said Gottfried. "These kids are basicalhe can't play in the first six games. I don't think "They say they have done nothing wrong, and that's going to happen. I think his season is lost." to me it's ludicrous that somebody would accept Gottfried also calls for NCAA reform. Austhat," said Gottfried. "They had kids break rules. tin's grand-in-aid scholarship provided him with They have put a lot of kids in bad situations, \$376 a month. His rent cost him \$300. That left

dent to look at individual hardship cases," Gottfried said. "He can determine if those hardship cases should be allowed to work a supervised part-time job. You can't continue to have blanket rules for everybody."

One rule Gottfried won't yield on is the ban on players having agents. "Players signing with agents is not to be taken lightly," said Gottfried. "An agent who will implore and deceive a kid into breaking the rules would be willing to do anything illegal. Once he's got a kid in that situation, he has leverage. Agents start telling kids, 'Hey, you should have carried the ball more. They're not doing you right. Don't play if you're hurt.'" Gottfried said he isn't against all agents. "The good ones, and there are few of them, seem to struggle," he said. "We've got one here in Pittsburgh, Ralph Cindrich, who has a tough time getting the first-round kid because he's too legitimate. That's ridiculous." Gottfried expects a trend toward states passing legislation that prohibits agents from signing players with eligibility remaining. "That way, you can tell a kid he isn't just breaking an NCAA rule, but he's breaking a state law as well." He clearly wants the U.S. Attorney to deal with an iron fist on Walters and Bloom. "I hope the grand jury understands that there has been a fraud committed here, in my opinion," said Gottfried. "I know I feel defrauded. Our school has been defrauded. The kids on this team have been defrauded. I think Walters, Bloom and Bolar should be indicted and convicted. "The bottom line here is I think a crime was committed. I hope we get some answers and resolution from it. And I think we will."

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Gottfried won't say exactly how he uncovered evidence that Gladman and Austin had received money. The NCAA is reportedly following his lead in trying to uncover other undergraduates who have taken money from the agents.

The initial outcome is that Pitt's football team loses two talented players.

"There's no doubt in my mind that losing Gladman and Austin hurts the team," said Gottfried.

Gottfried fears that his team and the two players - who have lost their scholarships, their senior playing seasons and probably some money because their value as NFL prospects likely would have been higher in 1988 — might be the ly good people. They made a mistake. There has only ones punished. In Gottfried's mind, the to be a penalty. But there has to be some underagents should be punished, but Gottfried knows standing to each individual case. I was hoping to they may not be. He turns emotional when he get some type of immunity for Austin, where we talks about Walters, Bloom and their primary re- play an 11-game seaspon and the NCAA tells him cruiter, Terry Bolar.



March 12: Norby Walters, a New York-based agent, admitted in a story published in The Atlanta Journal and The Atlanta Constitution that he has given cash to numerous college athletes in an effort to sign them as clients - a violation of NCAA rules that could result in players losing their eligibility. Walters defended the practice as good business and noted that the NCAA has no jurisdiction over him. It was also reported that two college seniors allegedly had told the NFL players' union that Walters threatened "to break their legs" for firing him. Walters denied this. While admitting that he's broken NCAA rules, Walters said he has broken no laws. March 13: At least five colleges immediately opened investigations to determine whether Walters has had dealings with their players: Florida, Alabama, Auburn, Michigan State and Ohio State. March 26: It was reported that the U. S. Attorney's office in Chicago and the FBI had begun investigations into the activities of Walters and his associate, Lloyd Bloom. March 27: It was reported that Walters and Bloom had filed lawsuits against former college standouts Brent Fullwood of Auburn and Terrence Flagler of Clemson, charging that the players signed contracts and accepted money before their senior seasons last fall -- violations of NCAA rules - and then reneged on the contracts. (The agents have filed similar suits against at least five other former college players.)

April 28: University of Washington defensive end Reggie Rogers, in a lawsuit filed against Walters, gave this account of a meeting with the agent in December: Walters opened his briefcase, said "I came prepared," took \$5,000 cash out of the briefcase and spread it across the living-room floor in front of Rogers. Walters fraudulently told Rogers he would not be breaking NCAA rules by accepting the money and signing a contract, the suit in the Superior Court of Sacramento County, Calif., alleges.

May 20: College athletes allegedly involved with the agents were told by a U. S. attorney that they could face up to one year in jail for fraud and tax evasion.

May 23: Walters said he is innocent of

May 8: The University of Alabama declared basketball player Derrick McKey, the SEC's player of the year as a junior, ineligible for his senior season because of evidence that McKey signed a contract with and accepted money from Walters during his junior season. This evidence was provided to the school by the FBI.

May 19: A federal grand jury began proceedings in Chicago to investigate the activities of Walters and Bloom. Several athletes and athletic directors were immediately subpoenaed to testify. The grand jury, sources said, would consider such charges as fraud, mail fraud, wire fraud, extortion and violation of the RICO (Racketeering Influenced Corrupt Organizations) Act against the agents. The grand jury also would consider whether to hand down indictments against athletes for committing fraud against colleges by signing contracts in violation of the terms of their signed scholarships. At least 50 to 60 athletes have been or will be subpoenaed by the grand jury, sources said.

any criminal wrongdoing, and he called the FBI and federal grand jury investigations "totally off base."

June 11: New York State Supreme Court Judge Myriam J. Altman, in denying Walters' request to dismiss an NFL arbitration proceeding, described Walters' practices as pernicious and deceptive in influencing athletes to act unethically.

June 17: It was reported that two prominent football players with eligibility remaining at the University of Pittsburgh would soon be declared ineligible by the school and the NCAA for signing contracts with Walters and Bloom. The players: running back Charles Gladman and defensive back Teryl Austin.

June 26: It was reported that Austin told school officials that Walters stopped \$250-a-month payments and encouraged him to tear up his contract because the player's value as an NFL prospect had dropped.

June 28: In an interview, Walters said, "We've been blamed for everything but the Iran-Iragi war, and I think that's next."

Current status: The U. S. Attorney and the federal grand jury continue to pursue the case. The grand jury meets each Tuesday in Chicago and is expected to continue hearing testimony until late August or September.