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Sports agent lawyer hit on 'conflict'

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A Beverly Hills attorney and book author cannot defend sports agent **Lloyd Bloom** on **racketeering** charges because the lawyer once represented a potential trial witness, prosecutors told a federal judge Thursday in a secret session. Michael Trope, 37, a former sports agent who became an attorney last December, has a direct conflict of interest, U.S. Attorney Anton Valukas and Assistant U.S. Attorney Howard Pearl maintained in the closed-door hearing in the chambers of U.S. District Judge George Marovich.

Bloom and co-defendant **Norby Walters** are charged in an eight-count federal indictment with paying bribes to sign up top college athletes and threatening physical violence to keep them as clients.

One of the 43 former student athletes expected to be called as government witnesses against **Bloom** once used Trope as a sports agent, sources said.

The meeting and a court reporter's transcript were ordered sealed by Marovich, but the Chicago Sun-Times learned that Trope was told he cannot defend **Bloom** at trial.

Valukas and Pearl had no comment, but sources said that if **Bloom** does not secure another trial attorney by Sept. 15, Marovich will order Trope off the case.

The jacket of Trope's 1987 book *Necessary Roughness* calls Trope "football's most visible and successful agent" who "has seen it all" as "agent to more than 200 of football's greatest players," including Lawrence Taylor, Tony Dorsett, Earl Campbell, Mike Rozier, Mike Quick and Chuck Muncie.

Both **Bloom**, 29, of Sherman Oaks, Calif., and **Walters**, 58, of New York, submitted pleas of not guilty Thursday.

Marovich scheduled a trial date of Feb. 27, 1989, which prosecutors said would accommodate the schedules of many athlete witnesses now in pro sports.

The Sun-Times has learned also that prosecutors are trying to persuade **Bloom** to cooperate and testify against **Walters**, his associate in the World Sports and Entertainment agency.

Bloom has appeared before the grand jury here three times but thus far has refused to provide evidence against his co-defendant, sources said.

His book, Trope wrote in its introduction, is about "wild, irresponsible players; conniving, eccentric owners; posturing, hypocritical college coaches, and ruthless, backstabbing agents."

"There isn't a sports agent in the business who still has his soul," wrote Trope, who quit being an agent in 1986. "They sold them to the devil years ago."

Reached after the court session Thursday, Trope said, "I am not at liberty to discuss what went on in the judge's chambers. There were a number of matters discussed, though."

He also said, "Right now, I'm **Lloyd's** attorney and anticipate being so for the foreseeable future."

Indicted sports agents **Norby Walters** (left) and **Lloyd Bloom** enter the Dirksen Federal Building on Thursday. Credit: Brian Jackson

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