

← Back

N.Y. mobster infiltrated college sports, jury told

By Adrienne Drell March 7, 1989 Publication: Chicago Sun-Times Page: 11 Word Count: 300

College football was infiltrated by a high-ranking New York mobster who bankrolled the corruption of athletes by sports agents **Norby Walters** and **Lloyd Bloom**, U.S. Attorney Anton R. Valukas charged Monday. Michael **Franzese**, "a captain in the Colombo organized crime family in New York," gave \$50,000 to **Walters'** firm, World Sports & Entertainment Inc., in 1984, Valukas told a jury.

Franzese also allowed the agents to invoke his name to intimidate clients, Valukas said.

Defense attorneys, however, said **Franzese** was willing to lie about anything to secure "the deal of a lifetime." He is serving a 10-year prison term for **racketeering**.

The arguments kicked off the trial of **Walters** and **Bloom** on charges of **racketeering**, mail **fraud** and conspiracy for allegedly using cash and favors to sign on collegiate stars and then threats of violence to keep them as clients.

U.S. District Judge George Marovich listened along with a packed courtroom and 16 alternate and regular jurors as Valukas sparred with his onetime colleague, former U.S. Attorney Dan Webb.

The two men have never tried a case against each other, and the proceedings should prove a dramatic confrontation. Monday, Valukas objected seven times to defense attorney Webb's opening statement.

Valukas told the jury that seven universities - Michigan, Michigan State, Iowa, Notre Dame, Miami of Ohio, Purdue and Temple - were defrauded out of thousands of dollars in scholarships to the athletes.

Bloom, 29, now a Californian, and Walters, 58, of Manhattan, allegedly wooed the players with cash, cars and airline tickets, Valukas said. The agents then allegedly post-dated the contracts so the students could remain eligible for amateur play under National Collegiate Athletic Association rules.

But attorneys Robert Gold, representing Walters, and Webb, representing Bloom, said the universities were not fraud victims. They said the schools continually overlooked NCAA violations to make millions of dollars off sports.

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Page: 11

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