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Ex-Iowa star tells grade woes - Harmon played while apparently ineligible

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Buffalo Bills running back **Ronnie Harmon** may have been academically ineligible in 1985 when he led the **Iowa Hawkeyes** to the Rose Bowl, federal court testimony here indicated Tuesday. **Harmon**, 24, a communications major, said he was unable to maintain a C average at the University of **Iowa** despite taking courses such as watercolors, billiards and bowling.

And he even flunked American Film, one of the three courses in his major, **Harmon** told a federal jury.

Harmon was the leadoff government witness in the **fraud** trial of sports agents **Norby Walters** and **Lloyd Bloom**, accused of showering college athletes with cash, cars and plane tickets to sign them as clients in violation of National Collegiate Athletic Association rules.

He quit school in January, 1986, after **Iowa** lost to UCLA in the Rose Bowl.

Harmon's statements came as defense attorneys cross-examined him trying to show that colleges skirted the rules by rewarding less-than-able student players like **Harmon**.

Despite a grade point average of 1.62, **Harmon** said, **Iowa** officials certified to the Big 10 that

he was academically eligible in 1985.

According to Big 10 Conference rules, students enrolled in college after Aug. 1, 1983, must have a 2.0 average in their fourth and fifth years in school.

Big 10 lawyer Byron Gregory, reached late Tuesday, said, "In fact Harmon's grade point average as a senior was at least 2 points and he was academically qualified for every athletic contest in which he represented the University of Iowa."

Prosecutors contend Iowa and six other universities (including four Big 10 schools) were defrauded out of more than \$50,000 in athletic scholarships by Walters and Bloom.

Harmon and 42 other former collegians have agreements with the government to avoid prosecution by repaying their alma maters.

Harmon said he received an unsolicited phone call from Bloom in March, 1985, while he was recovering from a broken right leg.

"This is your lucky day," Harmon said Bloom announced, inviting him to fly to New York. Harmon said he was picked up at the airport in a limo and whisked to the Manhattan offices of World Sports & Entertainment to meet the two agents.

The next morning Harmon, who was to realize \$54,000 in cash over the next 15 months from Walters and Bloom, returned with his father.

Harmon carried a tape recorder to that session and held it on his lap while Walters delivered a nearly 40-minute monologue. The tape was played for jurors.

"Well, ya know, I've become the No. 1 agent in American regarding musical entertainment," Walters was heard boasting in a Brooklyn accent. "There's nobody larger than I am, Mr. Harmon."

"Norby Walters is in the sports business with a vengeance. He is out there looking to make deals for these kids like he's making for the Luther Van Dross' and the Commodores and the Kool and the Gang," said Walters, an agent for the singing groups.

Harmon said the contract was postdated to Jan. 2, 1986, when he would be eligible for

professional drafting. But shortly before signing with the Buffalo Bills in April, 1986, Harmon said he fired the two agents.

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