Agents Attempt to Show Iowa's Harmon Shouldn't Have Been Eligible

By Chris Mortensen Staff Writer

CHICAGO — A defense attorney for sports agent Lloyd Bloom produced evidence Wednesday that former University of Iowa running back Ronnie Harmon should have been ineligible to play in 1985, while a school official testified to

the contrary. Harmon, former teammate Devon Mitchell and Iowa assistant athletic director Fred Mims spent the day on the witness stand here, where Bloom and former associate Norby Walters are on trial for racketeering, mail fraud, wire fraud and

Walters and Bloom are attempting to show that they could not have defrauded the university by signing Harmon to a representation contract before his eligibility expired, as prosecutors charge, if the school itself falsely certified him as eligible to play.

Harmon's academic records show that an Iowa academic counseler on Sept. 20, 1985, reported that "this semester has been a disaster for him. He is still not working toward a degree."

Mims testified that Harmon met eligibility standards to play for the 1985 season. Big Ten attorney Byron Gregory supported that contention outside the courtroom, saying Harmon's 1.91 grade-point average was above the league minimum 1.85 standard set at that time. It has since been raised to 2.0.

In Iowa City, a university vice president released a statement saying that Harmon's grade-point average was "at all times over 2.0."

However, Bloom's attorney Dan Webb, established that, based on a report by Iowa academic counselor Susan Walker, that Harmon failed to comply with NCAA rules requiring that in order to be athletically eligible, a "student-athlete must be

Johnson Described As Being Lured To Use of Steroids

The Associated Press

TORONTO — On the sixth day of track coach Charlie Francis's testimony before a Canadian government inquiry into the use of performance-enhancing drugs, the attorney for sprinter Ben Johnson tried to show that the athlete was manipulated into using steroids by Francis, who recognized Johnson's potential by 1984.

Ed Futerman asked several questions that suggested Johnson was mentally incapable of understanding certain situations, perhaps including his steroid programs.

Futerman did not challenge Francis's previous testimony that Johnson had used drugs since 1981.

Johnson was disqualified from the Seoul Olympics last fall after testing positive for an anabolic steroid after winning the 100-meter final in world-record time.

It was the most contentious day of the track-and-field phase of the inquiry, which began Feb. 28.

After questions from David Sookram, an attorney representing Dr. George Astaphan, who Francis has said supplied many drugs his athletes used, Futerman began a cross-examination that appeared to be designed to show that the coach had become a father figure to his client. -

Futerman created a defense portraying Johnson as an impressionable youth lured into steroid use by an ambitious coach eager for international success.

Futerman also tried to show that, contrary to Francis's concern over the welfare of his athletes -"my number one priority" - he, in fact, undermined his concern by introducing Johnson and others to steroids without a full knowledge of the drugs' effects.

Francis, seldom raising his voice, held firm to points he had made in earlier appearances: that Johnson understood what he was involved in, including steroid programs, and that Johnson could not have expected to win "at the highest levels" unless he competed on "a level playing field."

That meant integrating his training with performance enhancing drugs.

Francis also continued to insist that any of his athletes using drugs did so with an understanding of the ethical issues and under the care of a doctor.

Futerman repeatedly asked Francis what he told Johnson in 1981, and he said the athlete, then 19, sat through a half-hour meeting about steroid use with the coach's doctor without asking a question.

"I was under the impression he understood what was being said," the coach said. "I think it's fair to say I can't be sure."

satisfactorily progressing toward a degree. ... He must be a degreeseeking student."

In the report, Walker criticized Harmon's effort while the player already was on academic probation.

"When the university and athletic director certified Ronnie Harmon as being eligible, were there people on the academic staff who stated in fact that Ronnie Harmon was not working toward a degree?" Webb asked Mims.

"Yes," replied Mims, who attempted to argue with Webb the in-

terpretation of "degree-seeking student."

Webb showed that Harmon had taken just one course related to his major (communications) in his first three years.

Webb also reviewed with Mims one semester on Mitchell's transcripts. Mitchell was a defensive back who also had signed a contract with and accepted money from Wa ters and Bloom prior to his senior

"Let's see, he took 15 hours and he had a 1.0 grade-point average,"

said Webb. "He got an F, F, F, D, C and he was fortunate enough to get an A in football, correct?"

The lawyer then referred to Mitchell's senior season, also in 1985, when he was four hours short of degree-seeking standards, according to his academic report. Mitchell was asked about being notified by a letter from Mims that he had become academically ineligible, and about a subsequent meeting between the two.

"He told me my options," testified Mitchell. "Either take a class and what is required, or don't play." mer course, "Skilled Physical Education," and received a B grade to

Mitchell took a four-hour sumbecome eligible. "And had not Devon Mitchell al-

ready completed his physical education requirements?" Webb asked "Yes," the school official

replied. had received nine A grades during his stay at Iowa, all of them for

"football participation."

After verifying that Mitchell, like Harmon, dropped out of school after the Rose Bowl game, Webb asked Mims, "And the school received millions of dollars for playing in the Rose Bowl, is that true?"

"I can't say," said Mims. Mitchell will resume his spot on the witness stand this morning on the fourth day of the trial. Iowa athletic director Bump Elliott will fol-Webb then noted that Mitchell low, then prosecutors will present the case of Rod Woodson of the Pittsburgh Steelers, a former star at Purdue University.







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