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2 players violated Notre Dame rules, Hesburgh testifies

By Adrienne Drell March 14, 1989 Publication: Chicago Sun-Times Page: 1 Word Count: 566

The Rev. Theodore Hesburgh said Monday that two former members of Notre Dame's Fighting Irish football team who took money from sports agents violated the university's strict amateur eligibility rules. "The only money the athletes are dispensed is from the university," said Hesburgh, the University of Notre Dame's president emeritus. He added that the school would revoke the scholarship and dismiss any student player found to be receiving unauthorized money.

In other testimony, the onetime manager for Michael Jackson and his brothers described Monday how sports agent **Norby Walters** and a New York mobster tried to muscle in on a nationwide musical tour.

"It was a threat. The point came across," agent Ronald Weisner told a federal jury as he recalled a 1981 meeting with **Walters** and New York mob figure Michael **Franzese**.

Weisner and Hesburgh appeared for the government Monday in the second week of the **racketeering** trial of **Walters** and former associate **Lloyd Bloom** in U.S. District Court.

Government prosecutors called Hesburgh to buttress testimony by former Notre Dame gridiron stars Alvin Miller and Robert Banks that they accepted payments from **Walters** and **Bloom** to

sign representation agreements.

Both athletes have agreed to repay Notre Dame for their tuition and to donate community service hours. Their violations were discovered after their amateur eligibility had expired.

Miller, now a St. Louis travel agent, and Banks, who played defensive end for the Houston Oilers last season, both described 1986 hotel room meetings with Bloom and Walters followed by contracts post-dated to 1987 when their amateur status expired.

U.S. Attorney Anton R. Valukas asked Hesburgh if the university would have kept Banks on scholarship if it had known he had accepted \$5,000 in cash Norby spread out on a bed.

"No, sir," declared Hesburgh, adding that any aid could have cost his eligibility. "If a bank had loaned him money, it would be a violation."

Hesburgh said that if five basketball stars each suddenly showed up "in a Camaro, that would arouse some suspicion"

Bloom's attorney, Dan Webb, asked if Hesburgh was aware that two former star players had accepted free trips to Florida from Playboy magazine so they could be honored as members of the magazine's All-America football team.

"I don't read Playboy magazine," Hesburgh said, and the courtroom erupted in laughter.

He quickly added, "I have never in all my years of association with the university overheard of any scintilla of doubt about honesty or rule-breaking without looking into it immediately."

Weisner, who represents such stars as Steve Winwood, Paul McCartney and Gladys Knight, said he first began representing The Jackson Five singing group in 1977. In 1980, Weisner said, he attended a meeting at the Jackson home to discuss a fall concert tour. Walters, he said, was present.

Subsequently, Weisner said, a letter went to Walters that he was not being retained as booking agent. Making the decision, he said, was singing star Michael Jackson and his brothers Marlin, Tito, Jackie and Randy.

The following year, talk of a new tour surfaced and Weisner said Walters called him.

Subsequently, Weisner said Franzese - identifying himself as an associate of Walters - went to his office to discuss Walters' participation in any tour.

"If you don't go along with it, there could be other problems and there won't be a tour," Weisner said Franzese, a reputed mob boss in New York, told him.

Another booking agent was hired for the group, Weisner said, and "the tour went off with no problems."

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