

SPORTS

Mobster Says He Aided Agents Walters, Bloom

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A jailed member of a New York organized crime family said Tuesday he helped finance a sports agents business started by **Norby Walters** and **Lloyd Bloom**, and used his mob connections to persuade entertainers to do business with Walters.

Michael Franzese described two occasions when Walters, who with Bloom is accused of using cash to persuade athletes to sign contracts before their college eligibility expired, used him and his reputation to keep or line up entertainers as clients. While he did not directly threaten them, Franzese said, he made sure they understood his New York ties.

However, Franzese said he never personally contacted football players involved with the agents.

Under cross-examination in Chicago, Franzese said he threatened the manager of the Jackson Five singing group in an effort to get **Walters** involved in a concert tour.

Franzese is serving a 10-year prison sentence on racketeering and fraud charges in New York and Florida. Under questioning by U.S. Attorney Anton Valukas, Franzese said he was associated with New York's Colombo organized crime family from 1973 to 1986.

Franzese said that sometime in 1984 or 1985, Walters told him he was joining **Bloom** in the sports agents business and "he asked me to participate in some way."

Walters asked Franzese for \$50,000 to back the business and promised Franzese would get a 25% share, Franzese testified.

Franzese said he had known Walters most of his life and that he was contacted by **Walters** in the early 1980s to help persuade singer Dionne Warwick and a singing group, The New Edition, to keep their business with Walters.

Walters loaned managers of The New Edition \$20,000 with the understanding Walters would get 20% of their tour proceeds, Franzese said.

"I explained to them that I expected them to live up to the deal (with Walters), and that the \$20,000 was mine," **Franzese** said.

On another occasion, Franzese said, he accompanied Walters to California to talk with Warwick's manager, Joe Grant.

"The purpose was to make sure that the act, Dionne, remained with **Norby Walters**," Franzese testified. "And the act stayed with **Norby.**"

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