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# Judge blocks prosecutors' move in trial of sports agents

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*By Adrienne Drell March 31, 1989 Publication: Chicago Sun-Times Page: 18 Word Count: 393*

Prosecutors were stymied Thursday in efforts to show that the 1987 beating of an assistant to a rival agent triggered the criminal case against **Norby Walters** and **Lloyd Bloom** - not a flurry of lawsuits. U.S. District Judge George Marovich said the information on the beating would be too prejudicial for the jury to hear in the federal trial on **racketeering**, **mail fraud** and conspiracy charges.

The judge's ruling came during a conference with attorneys out of the jury's earshot after U.S. Attorney Anton Valukas tried to negate the testimony of a crucial defense witness.

The witness, New York sports attorney Michael Feldberg, had testified that he advised **Walters** and **Bloom** that filing breach of contract suits against college athletes or rival agent Steve Zucker could alienate the universities, the National Collegiate Athletic Association and others.

**Walters**, however, insisted on the litigation to uphold the agreements the athletes had signed with him.

Valukas asked Thursday if Feldberg was aware that the investigation of the two agents "was not started by lawsuits" but by "other information"?

Objections by defense attorneys led to the conference with the judge, where Valukas proposed to show that the probe actually started after Kathy Clements, 32, was beaten March 16, 1987. Clements, an assistant to sports agent Zucker, was attacked in her Skokie office by a man

wearing a ski mask.

Zucker and Clements were on the government's list of trial witnesses but were never called to testify at the trial, now in its fourth week.

Walters and Bloom are charged with defrauding universities out of scholarships paid to athletes who received cash and improper post-dated contracts from the agents.

Three of the athletes later signed with Zucker - and were sued by Walters.

In other developments Thursday, the defense rested without calling either Walters or Bloom to the stand and the government called an FBI agent in rebuttal.

Agent John O'Neill was summoned in an attempt to discredit the testimony of defense witness Joseph Grant, manager of singer Dionne Warwick, that neither Walters or mobster Michael Franzese threatened him in a 1982 meeting.

O'Neill said Grant told him Walters appeared agitated and began shouting after learning Warwick planned to fire him and that he was ordered out of the room by a dark-haired man believed to be Franzese.

Under questioning by Walters' lawyer, Ethan Levin-Epstein, O'Neill admitted, however, that he never showed Grant a photograph of Franzese.

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