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Deliberations set today in sports agents' case

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The lawyer for accused sports agent **Norby Walters** urged a federal jury Wednesday to believe the testimony of singer Dionne Warwick rather than the "lies" of admitted mobster Michael **Franzese**. "Don't be misled by an admitted and proven perjurer," Robert Gold said in reference to **Franzese**, the government's star witness in the **fraud** trial of Walter and fellow sports agent **Lloyd Bloom**.

The jurors are expected to begin deliberations today.

They are charged with mail **fraud, racketeering** and conspiracy in

bilking universities out of scholarships awarded to athletes who took

money and signed agent contracts in violation of amateur rules.

The two also are charged with trying to strong-arm athletes not to break contracts. **Walters** is accused of using mob contacts to pressure sports and entertainment clients.

Gold contended that the imprisoned **Franzese**, who admitted being a captain in the New York Colombo crime family, was "the poison supposed to convince you **Norby Walters** is a gangster."

Prosecutors called **Franzese** to the stand to "distract" jurors from believing **Walters** "was a

businessman who sought out the advice of prestigious law firms" before signing the athletes, Gold said.

Both Warwick and her manager, Joseph Grant, denied being threatened by Franzese not to drop the Walters booking agency. Gold said Warwick spent her own money to testify that "what Mr. Franzese testified was a complete lie."

"Would you choose her or him?" asked Gold.

But U.S. Attorney Anton Valukas, who tried the case with Assistant U.S. Attorney Howard Pearl, suggested that Warwick's own records contradict Grant's testimony about pre-booked concerts scheduled before Walters was dropped.

The government says the records show Walters continued booking acts for Warwick after the alleged threat from Franzese.

"Mr. Walters is not on trial for associating with a captain of the Colombo family but how he used Mr. Franzese and his connections - that's the crime," Valukas said in his final argument.

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