

← Back

# Guilty plea entered by sport agent Walters

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Sports agent Norby Walters, accused of giving college athletes money and gifts to sign professional contracts, pleaded guilty Wednesday to two counts of mail fraud. Under the conditional plea agreement, the government will drop racketeering and racketeering conspiracy charges. Walters, 59, faces up to 10 years in prison and a \$500,000 fine when he is sentenced Feb. 17 by U.S. District Judge Harry Leinenweber.

Walters and his former partner, Lloyd Bloom, were convicted in 1989, but the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals threw out their convictions because the judge erred in instructing the jury. Wednesday's plea bargain eliminates the need for a second trial for Walters.

"He's still broke from the first trial," said Walters' attorney, Ty Fahner.

But the case may be far from over. Under the plea agreement, Walters is allowed to appeal. He contends evidence presented in the first trial does not prove he committed mail fraud.

If the appeals court rules in Walters' favor, Walters can withdraw his guilty plea. However, the government then would be free to prosecute him for alleged perjury or obstruction of justice.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Helene Greenwald and Robert Rivkin allege Walters and Bloom secretly signed football players at the University of Michigan and Purdue University to

exclusive representation contracts. The agents' firm, World & Sports Entertainment, allegedly was bankrolled by organized crime.

Prosecutors say the agents gave athletes cash, no-interest loans, cars and other incentives to sign, then threatened them when they tried to break contracts or refused to repay loans.

**Walters** and **Bloom** allegedly induced athletes to lie to their schools about the contracts. Under Big Ten rules, a student athlete who signs a professional contract could lose his scholarship and get kicked off the team.

**Walters** has sold his business and is free on bond. He declined comment.

"He's keeping a low profile," Fahner said. "He's trying to live a quiet life with his wife."

**Bloom** is free on bond as he prepares for a second trial.

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**Page:** 24

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