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Former Sports Agent Bloom Slain

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Former sports agent Lloyd Bloom, who had conditionally pleaded guilty here to offering college athletes cash and gifts for signing professional contracts, was found shot to death in his California home, police said Friday. Malibu police had only sketchy details of the death, which was discovered by a "family acquaintance who was checking on the welfare of Bloom" Thursday morning, a sheriff's spokeswoman there said.

Bloom, 36, was shot several times in the upper body, the spokeswoman said, but no weapon was found. There appeared to be no forced entry, there was no obvious sign of a break-in, and it was unclear if anything had been taken from the home along Pacific Coast Highway.

Bloom and co-defendant Norby Walters were convicted of racketeering in 1989 in an alleged scheme that involved offering inducements to college athletes for signing professional contracts.

But the following year the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit overturned those convictions. Bloom and Walters then conditionally pleaded guilty to using the mail to defraud universities in connection with the scheme.

In July, a federal appeals panel tossed out Walters' mail fraud conviction.

Bloom had pleaded guilty to the single count with the understanding he could withdraw his plea if a federal appeals court found that **Walters'** actions did not constitute mail **fraud**.

Bloom's attorneys could not be reached Friday and it was not known whether he had withdrawn his guilty plea.

Federal prosecutors had alleged **Walters** and **Bloom** secretly signed football players at the University of Michigan and Purdue University to exclusive representation contracts.

According to National Collegiate Athletic Association rules, a player who expects to retain eligibility cannot sign with an agent or receive payment. The contracts would have allowed **Walters** and **Bloom** to represent the players when they eventually negotiated professional contracts.

The Postal Service allegedly was used, and the mail **fraud** committed, when the athletes mailed forms verifying their eligibility to their respective athletic conferences.

But the appellate panel ruled in **Walters'** case that it was unclear if the use of the mail had a role in **Walters'** scheme or if he had any knowledge of any mailings.

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