

SPORTS

Few Surprised by Agent's Slaying

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Trouble had stalked Lloyd Bloom for years. Accused of racketeering in a highly charged scandal involving college football players, Bloom prevailed in court, only to face later battles over alleged mail fraud and business deals gone sour.

So when the sports and entertainment agent was found slain this week in his lavish Malibu home, those who knew him were less than shocked.

"It seemed that he had a lot of enemies, because he made a lot of promises that he didn't keep," said Wolf Schmidt, a producer who won a \$35,000 court judgment against Bloom last year after a movie deal fell apart. Schmidt never collected a penny.

Ralph Cindrich, a Pittsburgh-based sports agent, said he felt "no surprise at all" in learning of Bloom's death. "Keep in mind the known Mafia people (linked to Bloom's activities) and the number of people done wrong," Cindrich said.

Bloom, 34, was found dead Thursday in his rented home on a bluff overlooking the Pacific in the high-priced Broad Beach section of Malibu. He had multiple gunshot wounds in his upper torso, and there were no signs of a break-in or a struggle, said Lt. Joe Brown, commander of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's homicide squad.

Although there were no obvious signs of theft, Brown said it was premature to say if Bloom's death was an assassination.

Bloom had turned his energies to the film world after he was involved in a far-reaching scandal that tainted the amateur sports world in the late 1980s. Along with a partner, New York-based agent Norby Walters, Bloom was accused of signing dozens of college football players to representation agreements before the players' college eligibility had expired, a violation of National Collegiate Athletic Assn. rules.

A federal investigation resulted in the agents' convictions on charges of racketeering, conspiracy and mail fraud in 1989. Although the convictions later were overturned on appeal, the case prompted several states to enact laws regulating sports agents.

"That (case) had a tremendous effect, most of it negative," Cindrich said.

During the trial, Michael Franzese, an admitted member of the Colombo crime family, testified for the prosecution, describing how he allowed the agents to use his name as a threat to keep clients from backing out of deals with the two men.

Two players—Everett Gay of the University of Texas and Maurice Douglass of the University of Kentucky—testified that they had been threatened physically by Bloom when they tried to terminate their representation agreements.

In a later interview, Bloom defended his innocence by saying, "Can you see Lloyd Bloom, this 5-foot-11, fragile, little guy telling a 6-6 athlete who weighs 300 pounds: 'I'm going to break your legs?'"

After winning on appeal, Bloom and Walters entered conditional guilty pleas to charges of mail fraud. Those convictions were overturned in June.

By then, Bloom had moved to an \$8,000-a-month apartment on Malibu Colony Drive. He left that residence under pressure from a landlord who sued to try to collect \$16,000 in back rent. Bloom also faced a bad check charge, records show.

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