Minutemen's NCAA status unknown

"We'll

just wait

and see

what

unfolds."

By KEN DAVIS Courant Staff Writer

UMass athletic director Bob wasn't any noticeable evidence that Marcus Camby was accepting money and gifts from agents while playing for the UMass basketball ream.

But even if UMass athletic department officials were unaware of possible rules violations by Camby, the Minutemen might be forced to forfeit their victories and revenues from the 1996 NCAA **Tournament. UMass was 35-2 last** season and advanced to the Final Four before losing to Kentucky in a national semifinal.

S. David Berst, NCAA assistant executive director for enforcement, said Monday a school wouldn't be required to forfeit any regular season victories.

agents, but I can't comment on Marcus' comments because I don't know anything about them." Marcum said he couldn't re-Marcum said Monday there member the first time he noticed the necklace Camby started wearing around Christmas, but said it

didn't raise suspicion when he saw it around Camby's neck.

"I saw the necklace, but for a guy who's a player of

the year candidate, lives in the dormitory and doesn't drive a car ... I find all of this very unusual." Marcum wouldn't say whether he thought UMass would face any penalty from the NCAA. "It's like anything you are confronted with," Marcum said.

"Until you know its

meet again July 17-18 in Kansas City, Mo.

GINS ACCEPTED RULES BROKEN

"There's no doubt everyone on our staff and most of the schools in the country that have major players are concerned about [agents'] and how unscrupulous they are," Marcum said. "It's unbelievable. "It doesn't seem like anyone has

a handle on it. States propose legislation. People talk about national legislation involving these people and it seems like nothing ever gets done. Maybe it's one of those things that's difficult to do something about. Evidently it is, or somebody would have worked out a solution."

Bob Marcum In one of the most UMass athletic famous cases involvdirector ing an agent, Villanova's Howard Porter was deleted from the NCAA record books after the 1971 Final Four when it was determined he had signed with an agent while still playing for the Wildcats. Villanova's participation in the 1971 tournament (the Wildcats were national runners-up) was vacated.

were aware that a potential violation had occurred.-Langham admitted signing with an agent the day after the 1993 Sugar Bowl. Alabama lost four scholarships for 1995-96. In addition Alabama can sign only 12 recruits in 1996-97 and 16 in 1997-98. • In 1995, the Louisville Courier-Journal reported that a Louisville assistant basketball coach made nearly 100 calls during the past two years to a sports agent with a history of making improper payments to players and coaches. Coach Larry Gay maintained frequent contact with San Antonio lawyer Lance Jay Muchnick. Muchnick is an agent who was decertified by the NBA players' union for 18 months in the early 1990s.

 In 1995, a temporary restraining order was issued against sports agent Robert Caron in Los Angeles superior court after the University of Southern California filed a lawsuit against him. The university said Caron, who operated as the Pro Manage Sports Agency of Oxnard, Calif., induced student-athletes to violate NCAA regulations. Caron was charged with giving airline tickets, rent, phone cards and other payments in efforts to gain future representation for running back Shawn Walters, defensive lineman Israel Ifeanyi and linebacker Errick Herrin. The three were suspended from the team when the university learned of the violations. Former Utah wide receiver Curtis Martin told the LA Times that Caron gave him gifts and cash worth about \$10,000 - some of it beforeMarsh's eligibility ended after the 1994 Freedom Bowl.

Camby admits he took agent's cash

Continued from Page 1

ment, said a player taking money during the season could "jeopardize [UMass'] championship record and monies received from that championship."

Camby, his eyes swollen with tears, made the admissions in his airport hotel room in an emotional early-morning interview.

"I know that's wrong," Camby said. "I really wasn't thinking.

"You don't know what it's like, man. No, you know what it's like. When everybody is pulling on your shoulder, everybody. 'Marcus, hey Marcus. Hey, we want to be your friend.' This and that and the other thing. I think I succumbed to that a little bit. I just wanted to take care of

The Associated Press that he had not spoken with Camby.

"From a university standpoint, we couldn't see anything," Calipari said.

Calipari said he was certainly aware of the problems surrounding college players and agents.

"We think at UMass we do as good a job as anybody of keeping track of agents," said Calipari, who is a member of an NCAA committee that is looking into agents as one of the problems surrounding college basketball players and their leaving early for the NBA. "Agents have to check in with us and, if we even think they're doing anything improper, they're told they are not welcome on campus."

In late March, according to Camby, Spears flew with some of Camby's friends to the NCAA East Regional tournament in Atlanta. "I didn't ask him to fly my friends mond pendant worth \$2,500 and a down to Atlanta," Camby said. "He chain worth \$950 from his two took them down himself. He would have them buy and bring the receipts, give them the money back. I was buying this [stuff] because it was already guaranteed and paid for.' Camby admitted his friends purchased items from the Ralph' Lauren Polo Store in Atlanta. According to receipts, items were also purchased at the Atlanta Nike Town, and World Foot Locker. Monday, Camby's mother, Janice, denied any direct knowledge of inducements for her son from Spears or Lounsbury, but said that she went shopping in March at the Final Four in New Jersey with a woman named Monica, introduced to her by Spears. She said the wom-Hartford home, declined to discuss an bought her a pocketbook and a Camby said he met with Spears after the season ended with a loss in the national semifinals to the University of Kentucky. "I went over his house and got it cleared and stuff," Camby said, re-) himself at the UMass campus in ferring to the money Spears had spent. "He was like, 'Here is \$1,000.' I didn't have any money in my pocket. I know it was probably stupid on my part to take the money. "That was the only time I took cash personally from him," Camby said, "but he would send the money through my friends to supposedly give me - but they always kept it." Jackie Bethea, a longtime friend of Camby's, said, "I was doing one thing, trying to keep knuckleheads away, but it didn't happen that way. I guess he was doing other things. I hadn't talked to him since the day he announced [that he was going pro]." According to NCAA enforcement officials, illegal player agent contacts are on the rise. From 1989-94, leged gifts from agents while play- there were nine reported incidents involving athletes who had improp-Massachusetts, Marcus Camby told er involvement with agents. In 1995, In one of the most notorious cases "In a statement released through in recent years, more than 40 colhis attorney, James Bryant of Pro- lege football and basketball players. Serv," the statement continued, were identified as taking money in "Camby alleged that he never re- the 1985 to 1987 period from agents-Connecticut lawmakers, responding to the success of the University of Connecticut men's and agent to [blackmail] a fine young women's basketball teams, passed a law in 1995 that regulates the activities of agents who represent college student-athletes - although it was unclear Monday whether it is yet The law bans agents from doing several things before a student's athletic eligibility expires, including entering an agent contract or professional sports service contract with an athlete and giving, offering or promising anything of value. The law sets a fine of up to \$1,000 for each violation, and technically took effect Oct. 1. But it is questionable whether the measure has actually become effective yet.

"It would only be possible [in post-season competition] if either the institution or the athlete knew or should have known he was ineligible," Berst said. "That would be reason enough for restitution to follow. If only the athlete knew about it, it could jeopardize the school's championship record and monies received from that championship."

Camby, the consensus player of the year, acknowledged Monday he accepted cash and gifts, including an expensive diamond necklace, from two NBA agents within the past year.

"I'm surprised at those comments, because based on our observations here I thought Marcus Camby probably was the only player of the year that I know that lived in a dormitory and didn't own a car," Marcum said Monday when informed of Camby's remarks. "And it seemed to me that he certainly didn't seem to have an unbelievable amount of cash.

"We monitor those things very carefully. It's not the first time we've dealt with comments about

entirety and look into it, we wouldn't , have any comment on that. I'll have to

wait until I see everything. We'll just wait and see what unfolds and take it from there."

Carrie Doyle, liaison to the NCAA eligibility committee, said the NCAA investigated 20 agent cases in the past year, and none of them involved institution responsibility.

UMass coach John Calipari, who couldn't be reached for comment, is a member of the NCAA special committee on agents and amateurism. At a committee meeting in Baltimore May 10, Calipari presented a proposal he developed to provide loans to a defined group of highly skilled athletes. The loans would be based on the potential for professional earnings and would be available to players identified as having potential to be drafted.

The committee, charged with making recommendations in time for legislation to be considered at the 1997 NCAA convention, will

There have been other celebrated cases involving agents:

 In 1995, Arizona guard Damon Stoudamire had to sit out one game after the school learned his father apparently accepted an airline ticket from an agent.

 In 1994, Florida State reported 14 rules violations to the NCAA, most regarding improper agent involvement with football players. **Eight violations stemmed from an** agent-funded (\$6,000) shopping spree in November 1993. The ruling was later appealed and suspensions reduced.

 Alabama football player Antonio Langham played 11 games in 1993 even though he had signed with an agent and athletic officials

 In one of the more notable cases more than 40 college football and basketball players were identified as taking money from 1985-87 from agents Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom.

Staff Writers Terry Price and Tommy Hine contributed to this story.

my friends. I think it was a little pressure, too."

In the interview:

· Camby said he accepted a diafriends. They later gave him a Cuban-link chain worth \$1,829. Afterward, they told him that the jewelry was purchased by Hartford lawyer Wesley S. Spears. Camby said Spears wanted to be his agent.

· Camby said the two friends, Tamia Murray and Boris Wray, received cash from Spears and spent money on clothing and rental cars. Some of it they charged on their credit cards; later they were reimbursed by Spears.

 Camby said he accepted "a couple thousand" from Signature Sports agent John Lounsbury in the summer of 1995, before his junior season.

Spears, approached at his West his relationship with Camby or any dress. of Camby's specific statements.

Lounsbury, contacted in his Wolcott office, said, "That's ludicrous." have no comment on it."

Lounsbury did say he recruited Camby this year and introduced Amherst last year. He said he was eliminated early in the agent selection process.

Both Spears and Lounsbury are registered player agents certified by the NBA Players Association.

May 20, Washington-based Pro-Serv announced that it had signed Camby to a representation contract two weeks earlier. April 29, Camby had announced he was forgoing his senior season at UMass. One of Camby's agents is Tony Dutt, who also represents former University of Connecticut player. Donyell Marshall of the Golden State Warriors and Seattle Super-Sonics star Shawn Kemp. ProServ, in a statement, said, "Responding to inquiries about aling basketball at the University of reporters today that he had no there were 17 such incidents. knowledge of such activities. ceived any such benefits and any Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom. reports to the contrary are false.... Bryant has stated these allegations stem from a failed attempt by an man into signing with him." The word "blackmail" was in brackets in the statement. In the interview with The Courant, Camby said he met with enforceable. Spears in May. "I was saying nothing," Camby said. "He was like screaming mad, 'If you don't do this, then I am going to the press. . . . If I can't have you ... I'm going public with it. That's what he said." Camby, a 6-foot-11 center, led an undefeated Hartford Public High School team (27-0) to the Class LL championship in the 1992-93 season.



Wetteer Brown of East Hartford, a friend of Marcus Camby's mother, hugs Camby outside the Camby home recently. Looking on are Bertha Turner, holding her son, Andre Chatfield, and Janice Camby, the mother of the college basketball star.

duct against 10 city police officers

The coach, Weldon L. Ricketts,

said he was beaten on the soccer

field when he tried to stop police

from mistreating a criminal sus-

pect, but a jury in U.S. District Court

In June 1994, Spears won a

\$40,000 brutality verdict for anoth-

er client — a man so drunk that he

could not say for certain what had

Spears presented a novel case.

Using circumstantial evidence, he

argued that the man's facial frac-

ture could only have been caused by

Spears briefly flirted with politics

in 1987, while living in Bloomfiel

He was a candidate for zoning com-

mission alternate, but he withdrew

after publicity over his arrest for

lice charged him with assaulting his

wife of 10 months, but the case was

That same year, Bloomfield po-

Three years later, West Hartford

police arrested him and a girlfriend

and charged them with breach of

peace after a 3 a.m. disturbance at

his home. Spears and the woman

each filed complaints against the

other. The cases apparently were

occurred during his arrest.

a police officer's flashlight.

domestic violence.

dismissed.

dismissed.

by a Hartford soccer coach.

found for the police.

According to Camby, he met with

Lawyer can't get break in sports-entertainment field

By MARK PAZNIOKAS Courant Staff Writer

Wesley S. Spears is best known as a Hartford trial lawyer, but accusations that he unsuccessfully tried to become basketball star Marcus Camby's agent trailed another unhappy brush with the sports-andentertainment industry.

In a lawsuit Spears filed last year, the 42-year-old lawyer describes signing a contract that would have made him the promoter of a concert headlined by comedian Martin Lawrence and rap stars Snoop Doggy Dogg and Dr. Dre.

The performers never showed up, and their manager pocketed a \$44,000 deposit, Spears said in the lawsuit he filed in his own behalf in U.S. District Court in Hartford. The case is still pending.

Spears is on more familiar ground as a defense lawyer.

He is one of the regulars at Hartford's frenetic Superior Court, a stone fortress where no one enters without passing through metal detectors and where criminal defense work rarely is glamorous.

It is a place where harried prosecutors are under pressure to dispose of cases before trial, and a large measure of criminal defense work consists of negotiating a deal.

CONNECTICUT LAW

AN ACT CONCERNING AGENTS FOR STUDENT ATHLETES

Summary: This act 1) requires athlete agents for college students to register with the state Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) and pay a \$100 annual fee and 2) prohibits them from engaging in certain conduct. It requires the DCP commissioner to adopt implementing regulations.

The act authorizes the commissioner. after a hearing, to revoke or suspend registrations or impose a civil penalty of up to \$1,000 for violating its provisions. Violations are deemed to be a violation of the Connecticut Unfa Trade Practices Act.

The act states that it does not require an athlete to use an athlete agent's services or limit an athlete's ability to contract for these services out-of-state

EFFECTIVE DATE: Oct. 1, 1995.

Spears represents defendants on Smith. Instead, the jury convicted the sensational, such as the stabbing case he took to trial this year. He persuaded a jury in February to acquit a 27-year-old woman, Michelle Jessamy of Hartford, of murder in the stabbing death of her 15year-old former lover, Carvin

FURTHER EXPLANATION

Prohibited conduct The act prohibits athlete agents from 1) publishing (or causing to be published) false, fraudulent or misleading information or advertisements; 2) making false promises or statements about employment; 3) dividing fees with or being paid by a professional sports league or franchise or its representatives; 4) entering an agreement to give anything of value to an employee of a higher education institution for client referrals; 5) entering an agent or professional sports service contract with an athlete before his athletic eligibility expires; or 6) giving, offering or promising anything of value to an athlete or his guardian, spouse, child, parent, stepparent, brother, or sister before the athlete's eligibility expires.

cases ranging from the mundane to Jessamy, who had begun a sexual relationship with Smith when he was 12, on the lesser charge of firstdegree manslaughter.

> Spears also has taken on highprofile police brutality cases, including a 1987 incident in Hartford that led to accusations of miscon-

Lounsbury last summer. Lounsbury, he said, "took care of me. He gave me money and stuff."

While Lounsbury does not currently represent any NBA players, according to the Players Association, he has represented former UConn players Kevin Ollie and Brian Fair.

Camby said Spears initially approached "my boys" [Murray and Wray] at the beginning of the 1995-96 season to discuss representation.

"I wasn't asking for nothing," Camby said of his relationship with Spears. "He would give it. It was basically my friends that were milking him."

Attempts to contact Wray and Murray were unsuccessful Monday. Murray's brother said Tamia Murray was in Chicago.

In an interview at the Final Four in March on CBS television, Camby wore a flashy diamond necklace with his uniform number, No. 21.

UMass athletic director Bob Marcum was one of those who noticed the new jewelry.

"I didn't even know it was diamonds; you're telling me it was diamonds. . . . You look at our [team] rings, they look like diamonds, too, but they're zircons."

Marcum has complained that "runners" [agents for agents] tried to tempt Camby to turn professional during the college basketball season. "You're left putting out brushfires," Marcum said.

UMass coach John Calipari told

Initially, Camby responded to interview questions with denials.

"I don't know. I don't know," he said again and again.

He was wearing only a pair of maroon and black UMass basketball shorts. His body nearly filled the entire frame of the bathroom door.

Later, as he leaned back on the bathroom sink, his arms crossed, he talked with his head down. He seemed sad as he offered details.

Camby was asked if he would do it all over again.

"They were just opportunities to help my friends," he said. "I wanted. to help them, help my friends. I'd do it again, to be honest, if I could do something to help my friends.

"And I didn't have anything," he said. "They have been my boys since I was growing up. It was an opportunity to do things for them.

. I mean, I am going to be [the] No. or 2 pick, but my boys, they're back home chillin'.

"They took it as free money. I mean, if I can help my boys out, that was what I was trying to do. I knew mine was coming.

"If I needed anything, I could just go about anywhere, whenever 1 wanted. This was a chance for them. To try to get money and stuff and to do things, have fun and do [stuff] together."

Courant staff writers Ken Davis, Tommy Hine, Jon Lender, Mark Pazniokas, Terry Price and Thomas D. Williams contributed to this story.