

LONG ISLAND / NASSAU

## FBI informant spared jail on drug charge

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February 1, 2013

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A onetime [Long Island](#) high school football standout and nightclub operator who has worked as a government informant and witness for nearly a decade was spared jail time on a drug charge in federal court in Brooklyn on Friday.

Prosecutors said Gaetano "Guy" Fatato, 42, who has left the witness protection program but is living in an undisclosed location under an assumed name, deserved a break because he helped the FBI infiltrate the Colombo crime family and testified against mobsters as well as Christian Tarantino, the onetime [Dix Hills](#) health club operator who was convicted of three murders.

Assistant U.S. Attorney James Gatta told U.S. District Judge Kiyo Matsumoto that although Fatato had kept his family together and built up a stable business under his assumed identity, he and his wife lived in fear of retribution from the mob.

"Mr. Fatato's cooperation was taken at significant risk," Gatta told Matsumoto.

Fatato was a talented lineman at [New Hyde Park](#) high school who was recruited by Division 1 [Bowling Green](#), and played at the college level for [Nassau Community College](#) and LIU Post, according to late 1980s news reports in Newsday. He was also the onetime operator of the Rare Olive Lounge, a Huntington nightspot.

He pleaded guilty in 2004 to conspiracy to distribute methamphetamines, the last of at least seven convictions on drug, forgery and racketeering charges. He would have faced a mandatory minimum of 10 years in prison, but instead began cooperating.

Gatta said Fatato was not a member of the mob when he began cooperating, but worked proactively as an informant. Wearing a wire, he made more than 250 recordings of Colombo figures including former underboss John "Sonny"

Franzese and captain Michael Uvino, and also recorded and gathered valuable information against the other four mob families, according to government filings.

Fatato, dressed in a brown suit and looking like a businessman, was ushered into court by a squad of FBI agents. He did not say anything to the judge, but his wife -- who wasn't present -- submitted a handwritten letter.

She described to the judge the difficulties of leaving their home and raising two children, 2 and 3 years old, under uncertain circumstances. "We are already serving a life sentence as a family," she wrote.

Matsumoto said Fatato had "indicated his remorse not just with words but with very significant deeds." While sparing him a jail sentence, she did impose a fine of \$15,000.