

Agent Denies Violent Threats

Combined News Services

Norby Walters, under investigation by the FBI in connection with alleged threats of violence in a battle of sports agents to represent college football players, denied yesterday he was involved in the threats.

"It's ludicrous, it's sickening, it's vile, it's nauseating," **Walters** said of published reports linking him to the threats. "I do believe the [sports] agents who are my competitors will tell any of these young men to say anything to try to break a contract. Anybody's capable of saying anything."

A federal law enforcement source, speaking on condition that he not be identified, said the FBI's Dallas office has launched an investigation of alleged threats by several sports agents. The investigation was said to be in its early stages.

The New York Times, quoting other sources in yesterday's editions, reported the Dallas FBI office had recorded a telephone conversation between player-agent **Lloyd Bloom** and former Southern Methodist University wide receiver Ronald Morris in which **Bloom** was alleged to have threatened to have Morris' hands broken if he signed with another agent.

Bloom works for **Walters'** firm, World Sports and

Entertainment Inc.

The newspaper also quoted unnamed sources as saying the FBI was investigating alleged threats made against another former SMU player, Jeff Atkins. Atkins and Morris are under contract with another management firm, Athletic Associates, a Dallas agency owned by former SMU star Sherwood Blount. Blount has been banned for life from associating with SMU football because of what the NCAA said was improper payments to a prospect in 1984.

The NCAA canceled SMU's 1987 football season, citing payments that continued after the Mustangs had been placed on school probation in 1985 because of the Blount payments.

A source, who asked not to be identified, told The Associated Press that the Chicago office of the FBI had been brought into a police investigation in Skokie, Ill., where Kathe Clements, a vice president of the Zucker Sports Entertainment Group, was beaten unconscious and stabbed in the arm by a man wearing a ski mask. The attack occurred on March 16 in the offices of Zucker Sports.

Clements is the wife of Tom Clements, a former Notre Dame quarterback who plays for the Winni-

peg Blue Bombers in the Canadian Football League.

Walters said he has filed suit against five former college football players he said broke their contracts with him and signed with other agents: Rod Woodson of Purdue; **Ronnie Harmon**, formerly of Iowa and now with the Buffalo Bills; Brent Fullwood, Auburn; Terrence Flagler, Clemson, and Tony Woods of the University of Pittsburgh.

"All they did was sign contracts with the blessings of their parents and accepted support [from **Walters**] during their senior year," **Walters** said. "I'm the guy who done right. They're the ones who have done wrong. That's why I'm suing everyone of them."

"There will be one more: Reggie Rogers of Washington. He's being served the legal papers."

The NCAA allows undergraduate athletes to consult agents but prohibits them from entering into an agreement or accepting cash or discussing financial arrangements before their eligibility expires.

"Don't talk to me about morality," **Walters** said. "I'm the moral one. I'm the guy who supported the kids and their families. If it's done with the blessing of the family and you've supported the family, then they say you're fired, who used who?"

Eagles Cut It In Big Apple

It seemed like a good idea at the time. A personalized haircut with all the trimmings. But one had to wonder what the local folk thought when Southern Mississippi, an 84-80 victor over La Salle Thursday night in the final of the 50th Annual National Invitation Tournament at the Garden, returned to Hattiesburg yesterday for a parade down main street.

Who could blame the residents of the small city, which does not even allow public consumption of alcohol — Hattiesburg is located in a "dry" county — for wondering if the Golden Eagles had been corrupted by the Big Apple? It began Thursday afternoon, when guards John White and Casey Fisher and forwards Derrek Hamilton and Randolph Keys cut their hair in what has become a pregame ritual. Except Fisher decided to take it one step

further. Using a razor, he carefully trimmed an arrow and the initials "N.Y." into Keys' hair and then cut the letters into the hair of White and Hamilton before having his own done the same way.

"He started cutting and we all just said, 'Why not?'" Hamilton said. "Casey is our team barber. We let him do what he thinks looks right. The arrow looked sharp."

Kenny Siler thought so, even though the senior guard left his long Jeri-curled hair intact. "I like the way mine looks and I figured, 'Why change?'"

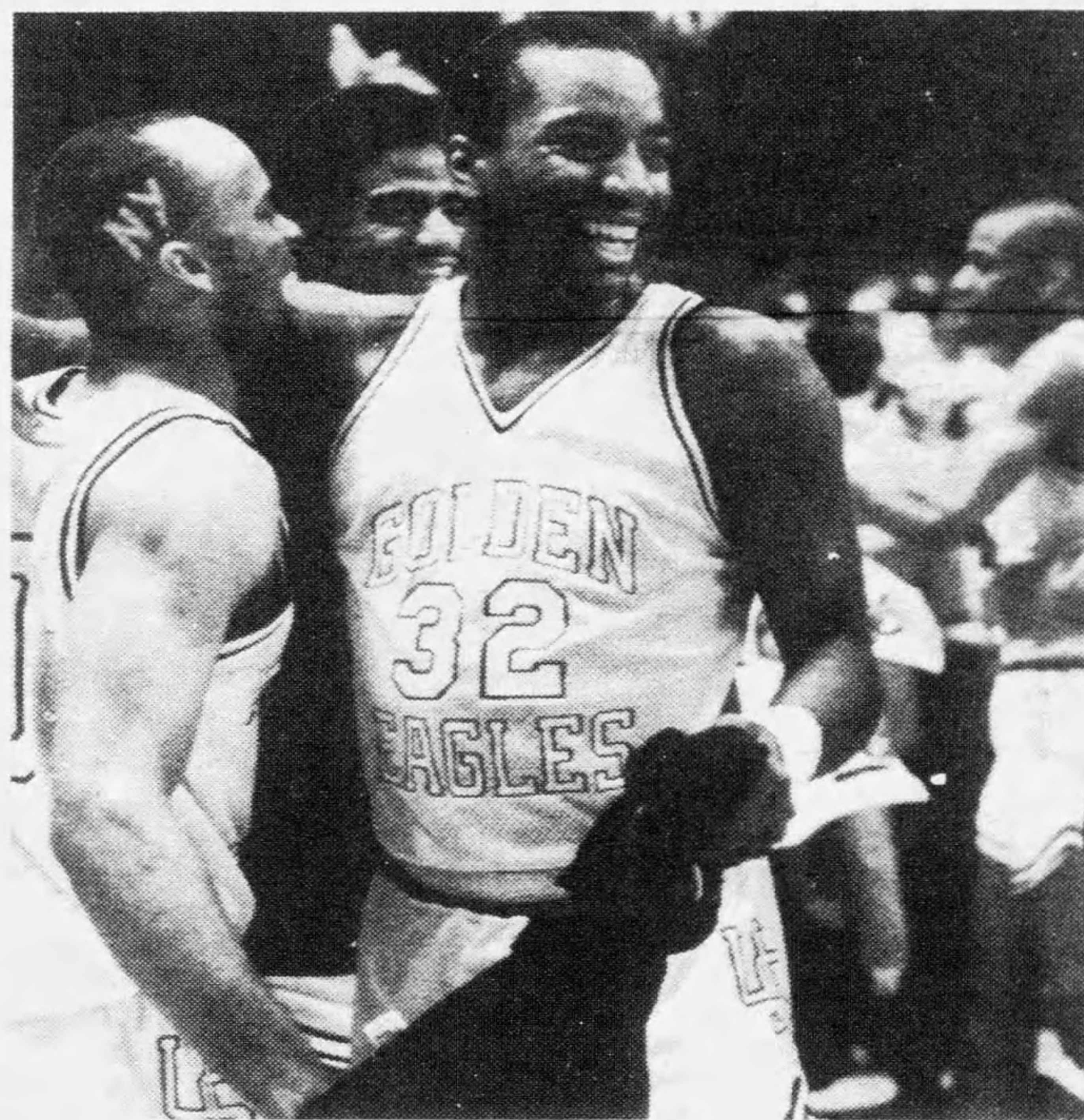
Coach M.K. Turk felt the same. "I don't think I'm going to get mine cut like that," he said.

Numbers, numbers

While coaches of the semifinalists tried all week to convince reporters and other skeptics that the tournament is still worthwhile, even by comparison to the NCAA Tournament, NIT officials were able to present the best proof: numbers.

The NIT drew nearly 240,000 people to 32 games — an average of 7,500 — and 12,742 people attended the final Thursday night at the Garden. More than three-quarters of the fans rooted for La Salle, which brought 31 busloads from Philadelphia. The two dates at the Garden drew a total of 20,707 for an average of 10,353 — nearly 1,300 more per game than attended the semifinal and final rounds last year and third highest in the past six seasons.

Each finalist figures to earn about \$60,000, said Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference commissioner Don DiJulia, whose conference was represented by La Salle. "Not bad," he said. Not close to the \$1 million each of the NCAA Tournament finalists will get.



AP Photo

Southern Mississippi's Casey Fisher, getting a hug from Jurado Hinton in the NIT final, was one of four players who returned to Hattiesburg yesterday with new haircuts.

Odds and ends

Southern Mississippi led La Salle 69-61 with 5:40 left in the championship, when an errant pass appeared headed for a sure backcourt violation against the Golden Eagles. Fisher dove across the line and tapped the ball in the air. Next came Hamilton, who leaped near the halfcourt line and tapped the ball to Keys, who grabbed it in the frontcourt to avoid a violation. It might not have been the smartest play, but it proved to be an interesting version of volleyball. . . . Lionel Simmons, La Salle's 6-6 freshman, had 64 points and 19 rebounds in the two games at the Garden and was often compared to Tom Gola, the all-America who led the Explorers to the NIT title as a freshman in 1952. Asked if he deserved to be named most valuable player in the tournament, an honor awarded to Keys, who scored 22 points in the two games, Simmons said: "No. I didn't do enough to help us win."

You said what?

• Nebraska coach Danny Nee on why his team was glad to be in New York City for the NIT: "When you come from Nebraska, you're really happy being anywhere except Nebraska."

• Turk on his team's three-point strategy: "We'll take the three-pointer when it's there and, sometimes, when it's not there." Southern Mississippi shot 18-for-39 from three-point range in the semifinal and final games.

• Simmons on why he approved of his teammates taking so many three-point shots in a 92-73 win over Arkansas-Little Rock in the semifinals Tuesday: "They were making the three-pointers. Three is more than two, so I can't argue with them."

Drayton Defends His Title

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Buster Drayton retained his International Boxing Federation junior middleweight championship by stopping Fred Skouma in the 10th round last night in Cannes, France.

The American sent Skouma to the floor midway through the round, but Skouma was up at the count of three and took an 8-count. Drayton resumed his attack and was pummeling Skouma, who was leading on points, when the Frenchmen's corner threw in the towel as the referee was in the process of stopping the fight.

Drayton upped his record to 32 victories, nine defeats with one no-contest in defending his IBF title for the second time.

In Cagliari, Italy, Efisio Galici of Italy captured the WBC junior welterweight title by stopping Orlando Orozco of Venezuela at 2:15 of the fifth round. . . . In San Juan, Brian Mitchell of South Africa fought Joe Rivera of Puerto Rico to a draw to retain his WBA junior lightweight title.

Espinoza's Manager Files Suit

Boxing manager Dave Wolf yesterday filed a \$2-million lawsuit in Manhattan Federal Court against World Boxing Association featherweight champion Louie Espinoza, whom he manages, as well as the WBA and managers Pepe Cordero and Paul Percifield. Wolf is alleging that the parties named have conspired to freeze him out of managing Espinoza and other fighters controlled by Cordero and Percifield. At the same time, Wolf is involved in an ongoing dispute with Espinoza, who has been trying to get the New York State Athletic Commission to free him from his managerial contract with Wolf, which runs through 1988. Espinoza is alleging mismanagement on the part of Wolf, who is fighting to retain his status as Espinoza's manager. Commission chairman Jose Torres, who will rule on the dispute, is travelling in the Orient and could not be reached for comment.

— Wallace Matthews

In Boston, U.S. District Court Judge Robert E. Keeton continued a hearing until Tuesday on an injunction sought by middleweight champion Marvelous Marvin Hagler to keep the WBA from withdrawing title recognition from him.