

Newsday / Paul J. Bereswill

Roberto Kelly, raised in Yanks' system, has solidified center and is hitting .276

A Solid Center Comes 'Round

Kelly's bat adds to glove, speed

By Joe Donnelly

Given every reason to be critical of the Yankees, Dallas Green hasn't spared them. Then there's Roberto Kelly. Despite the team's hollow start, the centerfielder has kindled the hope that the Yankees might be developing a young player of merit. He has not been dragged down to the level of those around him, and Green has noticed.

"What you hope to create here is competition for jobs," the manager said this week. "Not that Roberto is in competition with anybody. But he has played his — off. He's played like he wants to take somebody's job. He's showed some oomph with the stick, stolen bases when we've asked him and he's caught the ball in the outfield. That's what I'm looking for."

Everybody knew Kelly could shag flies with the best. And his having stolen five bases in six attempts is no great surprise. The question is whether he will hit enough to remain in the lineup. The Yankees aren't expecting a .300 year. But an average in the .270 range would be sufficient, considering the defensive asset he is.

So far Kelly is on pace. Going 4-for-4 Opening Night was a splendid start. But

there was an 0-for-14 drought. Kelly has battled back and while the Yankees have a woeful .197 batting average, he's at .276 (8-for-29). It is far too early to make a definitive judgment, but he hasn't hurt his case.

"I try to take one day at a time," Kelly said. "Every day is different. If you go 0-for-4, you can't worry about that. You have to come out the next day and go from there."

Kelly has a quiet discipline about him that belies his 24 years and makes him seem older. He observes more than he talks, and it blends nicely with his all-out hustle on the field. But it's not like Kelly is just getting started in pro ball.

He was 17 when he came out of Panama and joined the Bradenton Yankees in the instructional league in 1982. The 6-3, 185-pounder weighed all of 145. That summer was quite possibly more of a struggle than securing a regular's job in the big leagues.

"I thought people would cook for you," Kelly said. "I can remember asking after the first day I played in Florida, 'What time do we eat?' That's when I found out you have to do it yourself. I went with TV dinners for a

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Agents Are Guilty Of 4 Charges

The Associated Press

Chicago — A federal court jury yesterday convicted sports agents Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom of defrauding two universities by using cash to lure college athletes into signing improper contracts, and of threatening to harm clients at other schools if they tried to renege.

The jury deliberated 40 hours in six days before convicting Walters, 58, and Bloom, 29, both based in New York, on charges of racketeering, conspiracy, racketeering conspiracy and mail fraud. Each faces up to 55 years in prison and fines up to \$1.25 million.

Bloom was in tears and Walters looked downcast as the verdicts were read in the courtroom of U.S. District Judge George Marovich, where the trial began last month.

Attorneys for both men promised to appeal the guilty verdicts. "We'll take them in the next round," Walters said. "We'll be vindicated."

U.S. Attorney Anton Valukas called the trial a "war for both sides," but he said there was a message. "I think the message is that the federal criminal laws apply across the board to the universities, to the athletes and the agents who do business with them," Valukas said.

The government has requested forfeitures of \$250,000 by Walters and \$125,000 by Bloom. Under racketeering laws, the government can seek to recover profits that result from an illegal scheme. Marovich also set sentencing for the week of May 23.

Walters and Bloom were convicted of conspiring to defraud six schools — Big Ten Conference members Michigan, Michigan State, Iowa and Purdue, as well as Notre Dame and Temple. But the pair was convicted of actually defrauding only two — Michigan and Purdue.

"Hopefully this verdict will have a very cleansing effect on a few of the sports agents," said Leigh Steinberg, one of six members of the NFL Players Association agent advisory group.

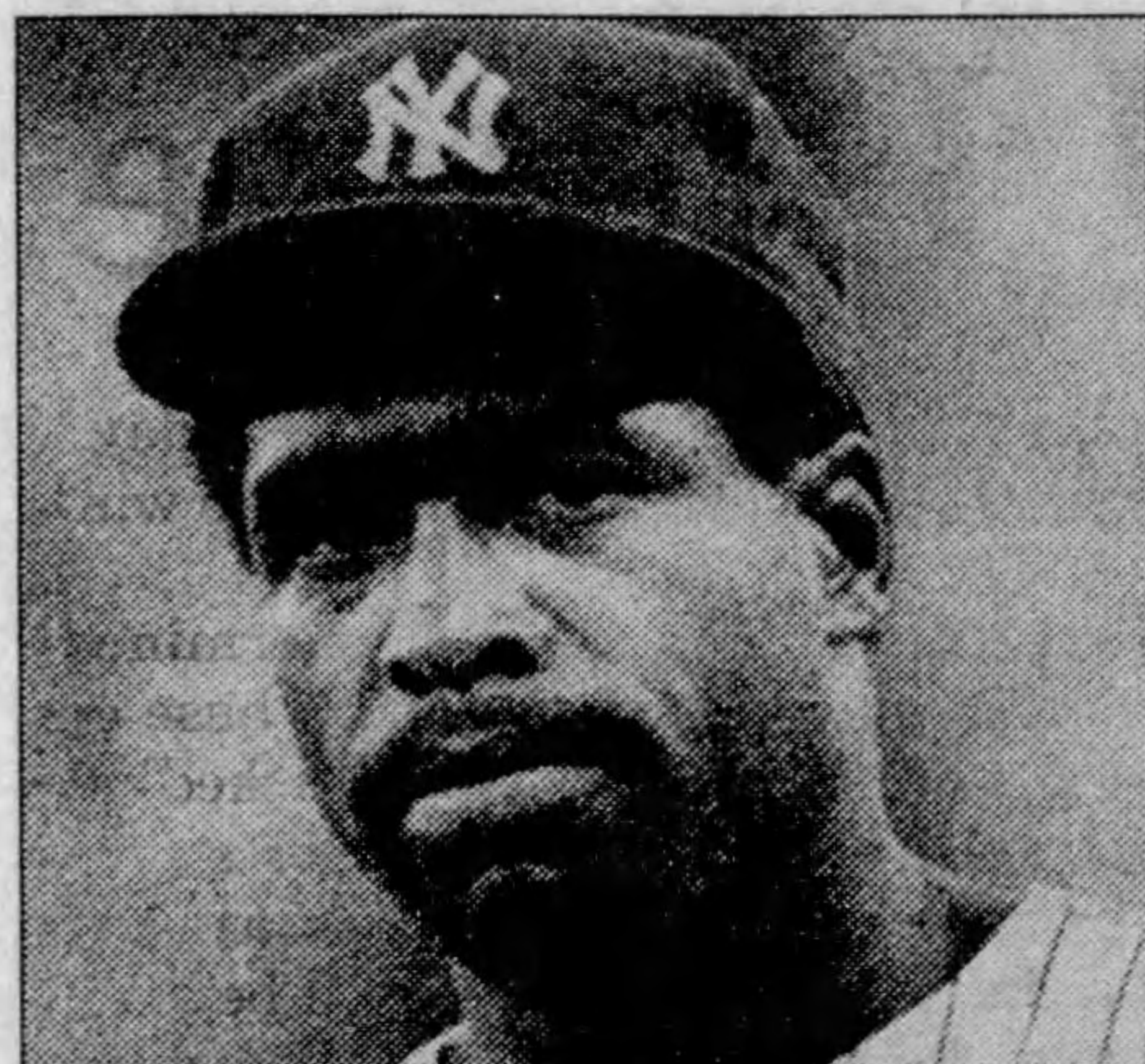
The trial featured testimony from a diverse group. Among the pro athletes were wide receiver Mark Ingram of the Giants and Bills running back and Bayside native Ronnie Harmon; Ingram went to Michigan State and Harmon to Iowa. Also testifying were entertainer Dionne Warwick; star prosecution witness and admitted Colombo family crime member Michael Franzese, whose reputation Walters and Bloom used to keep clients in line; and Bo Schembechler, Michigan's football coach who expressed outrage at the fraud he felt had been perpetrated on his school.

The government charged the two sports agents defrauded six universities by signing student-athletes to representation contracts that violated NCAA eligibility rules, then postdating the contracts and concealing their existence.

Defense attorneys had hoped to put college sports on trial, revealing a system rife with athletes who took questionable academic course loads to remain eligible and administrators who overlooked a variety of infractions to keep revenue-generating football teams on the field. Defense attorneys also portrayed the athletes themselves as "double dealers" who "ripped off" Walters and Bloom by signing with other agents and planned to cheat the New York duo out of commissions when they signed with professional football teams.

"The next couple of days, the legal teams will be reviewing the records," said Walters' defense attorney, Robert Gold. "We'll appeal in due course."

Some of the more dramatic testimony came from Everett Gay, a receiver with the Detroit Lions. Gay, who went to Texas, testified that Bloom threatened to have someone break his legs when he first talked about terminating his contract with Walters and Bloom. "There's no place for that kind of misconduct in representation of athletes," said Doug Allen of the NFL Players Association, who added he was "happy to see that justice was done."



Dave Winfield

Dave: 'I'm Not Done' But...

Also says there's chance he won't play this season

The Associated Press

Yankees rightfielder Dave Winfield said he has "absolutely no idea" when he'll be able to return to the lineup. Winfield, who grew up in St. Paul, Minn., told the St. Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch in an interview yesterday from his home in Beverly Hills, Calif., that there's a "chance" he might not be

able to play this season.

Winfield, who had back surgery March 24, is undergoing physical therapy twice a week. "It's very light stuff right now, just flexing the muscles, the abdominals and back," he said. "I'm doing pretty good. Mentally, I'm fine. Physically, I've been better. The back is better than it was for the past year."

"I'm not done by any stretch of the imagination. Maybe this will give me another year or two, instead of playing hurt."

Without Winfield, the Yankees have struggled. "But a lot of new people have been thrown in there," he said. "The chemistry takes time to develop. One man can't carry it all or change it all."