

1 of 1 DOCUMENT

The Boston Globe

June 30, 1996, Sunday, City Edition

Many saw dollar signs in Camby's rising star; UMass player had entourage of profit-seekers; SPECIAL REPORT

BYLINE: By **David Armstrong** and Daniel Golden, Globe Staff

SECTION: SPORTS; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 2374 words

DATELINE: HARTFORD

When **Marcus Camby** was just another gangly 13-year-old practicing jump shots on the playgrounds here, Granville Todd Glasco coached him in a Hartford church league.

But when Camby blossomed into a college star at the University of Massachusetts assured of a multimillion-dollar pro career, Glasco transformed himself from coach to would-be financial adviser. Then, after Camby rejected a \$ 200,000 line of credit that Glasco brokered with a Cincinnati bank, the one-time coach and friend publicly turned against his former player.

According to officials at UMass and the National Collegiate Athletic Association, an unseemly clique of friends, relatives and hangers-on has looked at Camby for years and seen nothing but dollar signs. Without having his best interests at heart, they regarded the UMass All-American as their meal ticket, long before he admitted accepting gifts and money from two agents.

As far back as the spring of 1995, the NCAA investigated charges that agents or boosters were making improper payments to Camby's friends, family members and youth league coaches, officials disclosed in interviews. The investigators tried to determine how members of Camby's entourage were paying for travel to UMass road games even in California, and whether any of them were "runners," or go-betweens, for sports agents, said Robert Minnix, the former NCAA director of enforcement, who headed the investigation.

Minnix and UMass athletic director Robert Marcum said university officials cooperated fully with the NCAA. But Camby's associates denied any violations and the NCAA, lacking subpoena power to obtain bank records and other documents, dropped its investigation without a finding. "There was a controversial situation, with all the people hanging around him," said Minnix, now associate athletic director at Florida State University.

Learning whom to trust and how to say no amid the glitter of celebrity is hard for anyone - especially an unsophisticated youth who grew up penniless in a housing project, estranged from his father. Caught in the cross fire between the two most important people in his life - his mother, Janice, and his summer league coach, Jacqueline Bethea, who has a child by his father - Camby had few adults to turn to for unselfish advice.

Last Wednesday, shortly after being chosen by the Toronto Raptors as the second pick of the NBA draft, Camby reflected on his recent turmoil. "I learned who my friends were," he said, "who the people were who wanted me to do well."

While he played with grace and poise on the court, off it, the 6-foot-11-inch center got a real-life education in exploitation, and made his own mistakes as well. Nor could UMass protect him. Its system, designed to screen agents and help Camby pick the best, was overwhelmed by the greed of hangers-on and unscrupulous agents.

While established agents made their pitch in interviews on campus in Amherst, back in Hartford, small-timers were subverting the process by cutting deals with Camby's entourage.

"I call it the Billy Carter syndrome," says one of Camby's agents, James Sears Bryant, of ProServ Inc. "Jimmy is in the White House, and who knows what Billy is doing back home."

In an interview earlier this month with his hometown newspaper, the Hartford Courant, the 22-year-old Camby acknowledged accepting jewelry and cash from local agents Wesley Spears and John Lounsbury before, and during, last season. Camby is now suing Spears, accusing him of blackmail after his overtures to represent the player were turned down. Glasco, Camby's former coach, filed an affidavit supporting Spears.

Camby is expected to testify this summer before a UMass internal committee investigating the agent payments.

In a speech in San Antonio earlier this month before the National Association of College and University Attorneys, San Francisco lawyer Edward King, a leading advocate for more stringent curbs on agents' tampering with college athletes, said he has been told by contacts in the industry that Camby took more than \$ 200,000 from at least three agents.

"If there was \$ 200,000 spent on Camby, it never got to Marcus," says one of his agents, Alex Johnson of ProServ, denying that anyone connected with ProServ paid Camby. "It might have gone to the people around Marcus. If someone said it went to Marcus, that's pure fiction."

Longtime mentor arouses NCAA interest

Jackie Bethea didn't even go to the Final Four.

Sitting behind her desk at a boys and girls club in one of Hartford's poorest neighborhoods, she says she was too busy to see Camby play in college basketball's showcase tournament. But she also acknowledges that she has kept a lower profile since NCAA investigators began wondering how she could afford to travel to a UMass game against Kansas in Anaheim, Calif., during Camby's sophomore season. Bethea says she had to go to California anyway for a cousin's wedding.

Bethea, whose 12-year-old daughter is Camby's half-sister, has influenced Camby's decisions ever since he began playing summer-league basketball for her. When it came time for him to pick a college, most of his friends and family urged him to stay close to home at the University of Connecticut. But Bethea was no fan of UConn coach Jim Calhoun. He hadn't scouted the basketball tournament she runs, and Bethea felt he slighted Connecticut high school prospects.

Instead, she steered him to the UMass recruiter, then-assistant coach Bill Bayno. Bayno, now the coach at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, reciprocated last summer, when he hired Bethea to work at his camp.

Similarly, when it became clear that Camby was a pro prospect, Bethea and Bayno favored the same agent: Arn Tellem. Both Bethea and Bayno were friendly with David and Dana Pump, identical twins who run a summer-league camp in California. According to Bethea and other sources, Dana Pump helps Tellem recruit prospects.

Because of these contacts, the California-based Tellem, who represents Cleveland Indians outfielder Albert Belle and Indiana Pacers guard Reggie Miller, was widely considered to have the early lead in the Camby sweepstakes.

Approached at the NBA draft in New Jersey, Tellem declined to comment on Camby, saying, "I don't talk about any prospects I don't get." Pump did not return phone calls.

Tellum had competition from other big-name agents, including Eric Fleischer, who represents first-round NBA picks Kevin Garnett and Stephon Marbury, and ProServ agents Johnson and Tony Dutt. Bethea saw Johnson at the UMass game in Anaheim in 1994, she says, and also one of the Pump brothers.

Prior to joining ProServ, Dutt had emerged from obscurity by signing four first-round NBA picks in 1991. Dutt acknowledged that his success has led to speculation that he pays players - a charge he vigorously denies. "We work real hard for a guy, and just because we get kids, people point fingers."

The chase for Camby also included lesser-known agents looking to land their first big catch. Lounsbury, who has

represented three marginal prospects from UConn, began recruiting troubled UMass guard Michael Williams, who was eventually kicked off the team in 1995. His eyes, however, were set upon Camby, who told the Courant he accepted \$ 2,000 in cash from Lounsbury between his sophomore and junior years. Lounsbury was thrown out of one UMass practice by suspicious coaches and later cut out of the formal screening process for agents.

Lounsbury, who declined comment, told other agents that he also hoped to snare UConn star Ray Allen. As it turned out, Allen and teammate Doron Sheffer both signed with Virginia-based Advantage International, which also handles Calhoun.

During Camby's sophomore year, the basketball staff also noticed another sign of trouble: the increased presence of church league coach Glasco. Sources said UMass head coach John Calipari was so concerned by Glasco, who often attended games with Camby's mother, that the coach set up a meeting and warned him to stay away from the program. Calipari, who was recently named head coach of the New Jersey Nets, declined comment through his agent.

Glasco was apparently unfazed. He discussed with at least three agents the possibility of working with them in what he described in his affidavit as a "financial advisory position." Only last month, Glasco negotiated the line of credit with Star Bank in Cincinnati, according to bank officials. The deal also included a mortgage approval to allow Camby's mother to move out of a housing project and into a new home.

Glasco, who works as a mortgage officer and did not return calls seeking comment, said in his affidavit that he coached both Camby and Tamia Murray, a friend of Camby's who allegedly accepted cash and gifts from Spears. "I used to watch Marcus play on television and then started going to some of his games," Glasco said. "I realized as I watched him grow that he was going to be a big-time player."

Camby at center of 'three-ring circus'

By the end of his sophomore year, with speculation rampant that he would leave school and enter the NBA, the scene around the quiet Camby was spinning out of control. According to Marcum, the situation was so chaotic that university officials begged for help from any agency they could think of, including the NBA, the NBA Players' Association, and the NCAA.

The NCAA's investigation began when it was tipped off that another star player, Louis Roe, was driving a new Land Rover. That tip was never substantiated, but the probe expanded to include Camby, whose mother was providing information to investigators about the activity of Bethea. Janice Camby declined to comment for this article.

Calipari and Bayno, on the other hand, were supporting Bethea and portraying her as a positive influence in Camby's life, while urging investigators to scrutinize Glasco.

"It was a damn three-ring circus," said one source familiar with the investigation.

Camby decided to stay in school, prompting the university to set up a formal process at the start of his junior season to help him choose the right agent. Candidates had to register with the university and undergo interviews with a committee that included Calipari and the team's academic adviser, David Glover.

Aggressive and vigilant, Glover acted as gatekeeper, deciding when and if agents could visit the school, attend games, and have any contact with Camby. Agents said Glover was obsessive in his desire to control the process. During the NCAA tournament, agents could only contact Camby by fax to compliment him on a game or just say hello. Glover screened all the faxes and even took a fax machine on the road. "If you made a mistake with Glover, you were out," said Bryant.

Glover, who recently followed Calipari to the New Jersey Nets, declined comment when approached at the NBA draft. "Nice to see you," he said as he turned and walked away.

The effort by school officials, while well-intentioned, was too late. Most of the agents had already been in the Camby sweepstakes for a year, and the agents who visited Amherst last fall for the first time quickly found out how far behind they were. Calipari invited two agents whom he respected, Keith Glass and William Strickland, to participate, but they had to play catch-up to Dutt, Tellem and Fleischer. So did Advantage International.

"There's no question we felt we were behind in the **Marcus Camby** hunt from the beginning, which happens to us a

lot," said Derrick Heggans, an agent for Advantage, which had four interviews with the committee. "We don't chase after UMass bench, seeking what one of them called "face time" with Camby. According to UMass records, regular attendees at games included Lounsbury, Johnson, Fleischer, and Fleischer's associate, Andy Miller.

After a half-hour meeting with Camby and the committee last fall, Strickland promised not to bother the player during the season. He wanted to attend one UMass game, against Maryland, but Glover asked him not to. In return, Strickland expected to make a post-season pitch to Camby - but never got the chance.

"Glover told me that Camby was more comfortable with the other agents," Strickland says. "I said to myself, 'You told me to stay away. Of course he's more comfortable with the others.' "

UMass ignored the lesser-known agents who ultimately would embarrass the university. When Lounsbury requested a meeting with the committee, he was rejected by UMass officials, who did not consider him a serious candidate.

Spears, a West Hartford lawyer, never registered as an agent or participated in the screening. Instead, Camby has admitted, Spears gave him chains and pendants worth \$ 5,279 and passed them along through two of the player's friends in Hartford.

The friends, Murray and Boris Wray, received cash from Spears and bought clothes and rented cars with the money, Camby told the Courant. According to Glasco's affidavit, Spears' outlay in cash, jewelry, rental cars, airline tickets and rental vehicles amounted to more than \$ 75,000 for Camby and his friends.

Camby alleges that Spears threatened to go public with those NCAA violations if the UMass star did not agree to hire him as his agent. Spears, who declined to be interviewed by the Globe, has denied the charge.

Several agents who pursued Camby now complain that he promised more than one of them, "You're my man." Ultimately, Camby made his own choice. Despite the recommendation of Marcum, who favored Tellem, Camby picked ProServ.

As Camby - who will make a total of about \$ 7 million over his first three years as a pro - and his new agents celebrated his selection by Toronto last week, Bethea was watching the NBA draft at a bar in Hartford's North End, not far from the small housing project apartment Camby shared with his mother and two sisters. Nor was Glasco part of Camby's draft-night entourage at the Meadowlands in New Jersey; the player has severed his friendship with the former church league coach.

As for the agents who lost out, some moved on to fight for the next prize, while others looked back ruefully. "This almost ruined my marriage," says one. "Every night when I went to bed, I was dreaming of a 6-foot-11 black guy instead of my wife."

LOAD-DATE: July 2, 1996

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: PHOTO, 1. **MARCUS CAMBY** / To get \$ 7 million over 3 years 2. **Marcus Camby** (left) with Alex Johnson, one of his agents, on NBA draft day in New York. He was the second player selected. / GLOBE PHOTO / JEFF CHRISTENSEN 3. **Marcus Camby** wears the necklace allegedly given to him, through friends, by agent Wesley Spears. / GLOBE STAFF FILE PHOTO / TOM LANDERS 4. Camby slams two points home for UMass off an alley-oop pass during NCAA tournament play in March 1995. / GLOBE STAFF FILE PHOTO / JIM DAVIS

Copyright 1996 Globe Newspaper Company