



## Ex-NFL player pleads guilty to wire fraud in FBI sting

McNabb Associates, P.C. (Federal Criminal Defense Lawyers)

Submitted at 9:52 AM August 8, 2012

Sun Sentinel on August 7, 2012 released the following:

“By Paula McMahon

A former NFL first-round draft pick who was arrested in an FBI fraud sting earlier this year has pleaded guilty to his role in the crime, court records show.

A second former NFL player arrested in the same sting is scheduled for a change of plea hearing next week in federal court in Miami, according to court records.

Former Oakland Raiders running back Michael Antwon Bennett pleaded guilty last week in federal court in Fort Lauderdale to one count of wire fraud.

He was caught in an operation by the FBI, which set up an undercover financial services store in North Miami between February and April. An undercover agent worked behind the counter and the store was equipped with audio and video surveillance equipment.

Bennett, who turns 34 next week, admitted that he had sent an email to the store fraudulently claiming that he had \$9 million in the bank so he could obtain a \$200,000 loan, court records show.

Bennett went to the store on April 18 and signed a loan agreement to borrow \$200,000 and repay \$280,000 after three months. When agents checked the bank account, they found that Bennett had opened an account there about a month

### Employment Screening Services Provider Settles Charges of Violating Fair Credit Reporting Act

(USDOJ: Justice News)

Submitted at 12:25 PM August 8, 2012

A company that marketed public records about consumers to employers making hiring decisions agreed to settle charges that it violated the Fair Credit Reporting Act and pay \$2.6 million in civil penalties, the Justice Department announced.

### U.S. v. Phillip Dennis Murphy

(Antitrust Division: Criminal Case Filings)

Submitted at 10:25 AM August 8, 2012

Document filed on July 19, 2012

earlier but it had a zero balance and there had never been any money in the account.

When Bennett returned to the store and picked up a \$150,000 cashier's check on April 30, he was arrested. FBI agents said he admitted that he altered the bank statement to give the false impression that he had millions of dollars in his account.

The maximum penalty for the offense is 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000 but prosecutors have agreed to recommend a punishment on the lower end of the sentencing guidelines, which are still being calculated, when he is sentenced in October.

Meanwhile another NFL player, William Joseph, is scheduled for a change of plea hearing on Aug. 14 in Miami. The terms of the proposed plea agreement will not be made public until the court hearing.

Joseph, 32, of Miramar, was indicted in May on five federal charges including aggravated identity theft, possession of false identification documents, theft of government money and forgery of U.S. Treasury checks.

Federal authorities said Joseph cashed a \$10,088 income tax refund check that was not his and that he did not have permission to cash.

Joseph played for the New York Giants between 2003 and 2007, then spent three years with the Raiders.

Former Syracuse player Louis Gachelin, 31, of Miramar, pleaded guilty earlier this year to theft of government money and

### Philadelphia La Cosa Nostra Capo Pleads Guilty to Racketeering Conspiracy

(USDOJ: Justice News)

Submitted at 10:16 AM August 8, 2012

Martin Angelina, 50, of Philadelphia, pleaded guilty today to participating in a racketeering conspiracy involving loan sharking and illegal gambling.

aggravated identity theft in the same investigation.”

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### Members of Alleged Sports Betting Ring Charged with Racketeering

McNabb Associates, P.C. (Federal Criminal Defense Lawyers)

Submitted at 3:35 PM August 8, 2012

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) on August 8, 2012 released the following:

“PHILADELPHIA—A 23-count indictment was unsealed today charging 16 defendants in a conspiracy case involving the Mastronardo Bookmaking Organization, a multi-million-dollar sports betting operation with bettors throughout the U.S. At its peak, the alleged



## MEMBERS

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organization had more than 1,000 bettors and was generating millions of dollars a year. All but one defendant (Joanna Mastronardo) are charged with conspiracy to participate in a racketeering enterprise (RICO) and conducting an illegal gambling business. The indictment alleges that between January 1, 2005 and January 1, 2011, the organization utilized Internet websites and telephone numbers that allowed bettors to place sports bets on football, baseball, basketball, golf, horse racing, and other sporting events. Residents of Costa Rica staffed the Internet and telephone sites. The defendants allegedly hid more than \$1 million in and around their homes, including in specially-built compartments and in PVC pipes that were buried in a yard.

Charged are Joseph Vito Mastronardo, Jr. and John Mastronardo, the two alleged leaders; Joseph F. Mastronardo, Eric Woehlcke, Harry Murray, Joseph Vitelli, Anna Rose Vitelli, Patrick Tronoski, Edward Feighan, Kenneth Cohen, Schuyler Twaddle, Michael Loftus, Michael Squillante, David Rounick, Ronald Gendrachi; and Joanna Mastronardo, the wife of Joseph Mastronardo, Jr. All, with the exception of Twaddle, were arrested this morning.

The indictment was announced by U.S. Attorney Zane David Memeger, FBI Special Agent in Charge George C. Venizelos of the Philadelphia Field Office, Special Agent in Charge Eric Hylton of the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, and Montgomery County District Attorney Risa Ferman.

The indictment alleges that the defendants ran the organization using telephone, Skype, e-mail, text messaging, and in-person communication. They allegedly met bettors in-person, often in public buildings and parking lots, to collect or deliver payments that ranged from \$1,000 to more than \$100,000. The organization also allegedly used a gas station on Norristown Road in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, as a mailing address and drop-off site to collect gambling payments.

According to the indictment, members of the Mastronardo Bookmaking Organization laundered the gambling proceeds using check cashing agencies, private bank accounts, and international bank accounts and provided instructions so that a losing bettor could pay a gambling debt through a charitable donation.

According to the indictment, leader Joseph V. Mastronardo, Jr. supervised the agents, sub-agents, websites (www.betroma.com and

www.betrose.com), office employees; laundered some of the betting proceeds; collected debts; and instructed others to collect debts. Mastronardo's brother, John, also a leader in the organization, supervised agents and sub-agents, laundered proceeds, and collected debts. John's son, Joseph F. Mastronardo, worked as an office employee, collected debts, and performed other financial duties. Eric Woehlcke was initially a bookmaker and office employee, then worked as an office manager, and eventually became a leader supervising agents and sub-agents and laundering proceeds. Harry Murray was a bookmaker who resided in Florida and laundered proceeds in and outside the U.S. Joseph and Anna Rose Vitelli owned J&A Check Cashing where, in 2006, they allowed the organization to occupy an office for the illegal gambling business and which was also used to aid in the laundering of proceeds. Tronoski, Feighan, Cohen, Twaddle, Loftus, Squillante, Rounick, and Gendrachi were all bookmakers.

The indictment alleges that in March 2010, Joseph V. Mastronardo, Jr., in a conversation with bookmaker Harry Murray, commented, "Well, times like this I'm happy I'm a bookmaker," to which Murray responded, "Me too." "Technology allowed the defendants to allegedly expand their gambling and money laundering operation far beyond the borders of Pennsylvania," said Memeger. "Unfortunately for the defendants, however, we have the necessary statutory tools to investigate and prosecute those who openly flout our illegal gambling and financial reporting laws."

"Illegal gambling and money laundering are the financial engines that help drive criminal enterprises like the one alleged today," said Special Agent in Charge Venizelos. "The type of gambling activity charged here is illegal. These types of extensive and long-term joint investigative efforts, worked with our partners like the IRS and Montgomery County Detectives, are intended to dismantle criminal organizations that profit from illegal activities."

"This alleged racketeering operation was anchored in Montgomery County but had tentacles spreading across the U.S. and beyond," said D.A. Ferman. "Despite our attempt to shut it down in 2006-2007 with a Montgomery County prosecution, my office discovered that the defendants, as is alleged in the indictment, were back in business. We partnered with our federal counterparts to examine the full scope of the alleged illegal gambling operation. Today's indictment reflects the work of

many law enforcement agents across multiple agencies. These defendants tried to 'game' the system. Today, they crapped out."

"The indictments announced today are the result of a significant and complex investigation," said Special Agent in Charge Eric Hylton. "With both law enforcement and financial expertise, our agents are uniquely qualified to assist with these types of cases by following the trail of money. Our office will continue to work aggressively to identify and target illegal financial gains."

Joanna Mastronardo is charged with one count of structuring in which it is alleged that she participated in making approximately 72 deposits in amounts less than \$10,000, totaling more than \$500,000 in a 12-month period.

Joseph V. Mastronardo, Jr. is charged in all 23 counts of the indictment. The remaining 14 defendants are each charged with the RICO conspiracy and with prohibition of illegal gambling. The indictment also seeks forfeiture of more than \$6.3 million as alleged proceeds of the illegal enterprise.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation, the Montgomery County Detective Bureau, and the Montgomery County District Attorney's Office. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jason P. Bologna.

An indictment or information is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty."

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