

NCAA Assistant Coaches Among 10 Facing Corruption Charges

Coaches arrested after taking bribes to steer students toward certain agents and advisers

By **Larry Neumeister and Tom Hays**
Associated Press

NEW YORK— Four assistant basketball coaches from Arizona, Auburn, the University of Southern California and Oklahoma State were among those arrested on federal corruption charges Tuesday after they were caught taking thousands of dollars in bribes to steer NBA-destined college stars toward certain sports agents and financial advisers, authorities said.

The coaches were identified as Chuck Person of Auburn University, Emanuel Richardson of the University of Arizona, Tony Bland of USC and Lamont Evans of Oklahoma State. Among the six others charged were managers, financial advisers and the director of global sports marketing at Adidas.

“The picture of college basketball painted by the charges is not a pretty one,” said acting Manhattan U.S. Attorney Joon H. Kim at a news conference. “Coaches at some of the nation’s top programs taking cash bribes, managers and advisers circling blue-chip prospects like coyotes, and employees of a global sportswear company funneling cash to families of high school recruits.

Since 2015, the FBI has been investigating the criminal influence of money on coaches and players in the NCAA, federal authorities said.

“For the 10 charged men, the madness of college basketball went well beyond the Big Dance in March,” Kim said. “Month after month, the defendants ex-

ploited the hoop dreams of student-athletes around the country, allegedly treating them as little more than opportunities to enrich themselves through bribery and fraud schemes.”

Investigators said the coaches have “enormous influence” over their players and how they select their agents and other advisers when they leave college and enter the NBA.

“The investigation has revealed several instances in which coaches have exercised that influence by steering players and their families to retain particular advisers, not because of the merits of those advisers, but because the coaches were being bribed by the advisers to do so,” the papers said.

Person was arrested in Alabama; Bland in Tampa, Florida; Evans in Oklahoma; and Richardson in Arizona. It was not immediately clear who will represent them — or Adidas executive James Gatto — in court.

Adidas said it was unaware of any misconduct by an employee and vowed to fully cooperate with authorities.

Person, the associate head coach at Auburn University, was selected by the Indiana Pacers as the fourth overall pick in the 1986 NBA draft. He played for five NBA teams over 13 seasons.

Among allegations in court papers were claims that Gatto and others made and concealed bribe payments to high school athletes and their families at least three times this year in exchange for a commitment by the players to play basketball for two universities not



These file photos show, assistant basketball coaches Tony Bland, left, Chuck Person, center, and Lamont Richardson. The three, along with assistant coach Lamont Evans of Oklahoma State, were identified in court papers and are among 10 people facing federal charges in Manhattan federal court, Tuesday in a wide probe of fraud and corruption in the NCAA, authorities said.

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Investigators said the deals caused universities to provide athletic scholarships to students who should have been ineligible because of the bribes.

In one instance, the complaint said, Gatto and others funneled \$100,000 to the family of a high school basketball player to gain his commitment to play at a Division I school whose athletic programs are sponsored by Adidas and to sign with Adidas once he became a professional. It said they paid another high school athlete \$150,000 for a similar commitment.

The court papers, which do not name the students, portrayed the universi-

ties as victims of the bribery schemes, saying the students and their family members conspired with coaches and apparel company executives to obtain athletic-based financial aid from universities through fraud. They said for the schemes to succeed, it was necessary to lie to the schools by falsely certifying that they were unaware of any rules violations.

A criminal complaint quoted Evans bragging about his ability to steer the young athletes toward prospective agents and advisers, promising he had the capability to “bury” any other athlete advisers who tried to recruit his players to sign with them.

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• Undergraduate student or high school student transitioning to college

• Minimum grade point average of 2.5

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• 20 hours of active community service within past 12-months

• Leadership involvement

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