

# ***NEWS RELEASE***

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## ***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA San Diego, California***

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***For Immediate Release***

### **NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY** - April 11, 2011

United States Attorney Laura E. Duffy announced the unsealing today of a one-count indictment charging 10 defendants with conspiracy to commit sports bribery, to operate an illegal sports bookmaking service, and to distribute marijuana. The indictment alleges that the defendants enriched themselves by operating an illegal sports bookmaking business and distributing marijuana, and with their criminal proceeds, conspired to bribe National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I college basketball players to alter the outcome of games so that the defendants could profit by betting on the games at Las Vegas, Nevada casinos.

A federal grand jury sitting in San Diego handed up the indictment on April 8, 2011. The defendants include a former assistant coach at the University of San Diego (USD), and two former college basketball players, including Brandon Johnson. The indictment alleges that Johnson, while he was playing for USD, took a bribe to influence the result of a game in February 2010. It is further alleged that in January 2011, Johnson solicited an individual to affect the outcome of USD basketball games.

Thaddeus Brown and Brandon Dowdy are also charged in the indictment. Brown is a former assistant USD basketball coach, having coached during the 2006-2007 season. Dowdy played at USD during the 2006-2007 season, and then later played at the University of California Riverside from 2008-2010. The indictment alleges that in February 2011, Brown and Dowdy solicited an individual to affect the outcome of a college basketball game.

According to court documents, Steve Warda Gorla, Paul Joseph Thweni and Richard Garmo, residents of San Diego County, orchestrated multiple criminal schemes, including the sports bribery scheme involving Johnson, Brown, and Dowdy. The indictment further alleges that others charged assisted Gorla, Thweni and Garmo by managing sports books, collecting outstanding gambling debt, and distributing marijuana. The profits gained from these criminal activities financed the college basketball bribery scheme.

United States Attorney Duffy said, "The drug trafficking and sports betting charged in this case were organized and substantial and reflect diversification of criminality that we will not tolerate. Whether in the area of politics, law, or sports, the phrase "the fix was in" sends chills down the spine of all Americans. Our country is rooted in, and values, fair competition and success based on hard work and self-sacrifice. Tampering with sporting events strikes at the integrity of the games; this kind of betrayal is not merely disappointing - it is criminal and worthy of prosecution."

FBI Special Agent in Charge Keith Slotter commented, "The FBI aggressively pursues all areas of organized crime. The sporting industry in the United States is a multi-billion dollar a year business. If games are thrown by a small number of greedy individuals who are only hoping to line their own pockets, the entire industry can suffer if the populace believes games are fixed. Therefore, the FBI will continue to pursue those who engage in this type of criminal activity."

Agents from the FBI arrested Brandon Johnson in Houston, Texas on April 9, 2011. He is expected to make an initial appearance before a Magistrate Judge in the Southern District of Texas. The defendants arrested in San Diego should be arraigned in federal court in San Diego on April 12, 2011, before United States Magistrate Judge Louisa S. Porter.

**DEFENDANTS**

**Criminal Case No. 11CR1345AJB**

Steve Warda Gorla  
Paul Joseph Thweni  
Richard Francis Garmo  
Thaddeus James Brown  
Brandon Johnson  
Richard Thweni  
David Gates  
Lilian Gorla  
Brandon Lamar Dowdy  
Jake Salter

**SUMMARY OF CHARGES**

Count 1

Conspiracy to Commit Sports Bribery, Conduct an Illegal Gambling Business, and Distribute Marijuana - Title 18, United States Code, Section 371

Maximum penalties: 5 years in prison and \$250,000 fine

**INVESTIGATING AGENCY**

Federal Bureau of Investigation

**An indictment itself is not evidence that the defendants committed the crimes charged. The defendants are presumed innocent until the Government meets its burden in court of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.**