

Beat: Sports

Former United States Golf Association Employee Sentenced to Prison

Stole more \$3.3 Million Worth of Tickets

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USPA NEWS - U.S. Attorney Jennifer Arbittier Williams announced that Robert Fryer, 40, of Perkasio, PA, was sentenced today to 14 months in prison, three years of supervised release, and was ordered to pay \$3,364,622 in restitution to the USGA and forfeit the \$1,150,000 in profits he amassed by United States District Judge Michael M. Baylson for participating in a conspiracy to steal and sell more than \$3.3 million worth of U.S. Open Golf tournament tickets from Fryer's former employer, the United States Golf Association ("USGA").

In October 2021, the defendant pleaded guilty and admitted that he sold the tickets for roughly \$1.2 million to two different Philadelphia-area ticket brokers, Jeremi Michael Conaway, 46, of West Chester, PA (who owns and operates Eagle Eye Ticketing Management) and James Bell, 70, of Glen Mills, PA (who owns and operates Sherry's Theater Ticket Agency), both of whom were previously sentenced to prison for their roles in the conspiracy.

Beginning in 2013 in connection with the U.S. Open held at the Merion Golf Club, while working for the USGA in their admissions office, Fryer realized that he could exploit a weakness in the USGA's ticket tracking protocol and steal tickets to the U.S. Open without the knowledge of the USGA. Rather than notify his employer of this flaw, Fryer admitted that he stole thousands of U.S. Open tickets in connection with the U.S. Open at Merion and arranged to sell the stolen tickets to Conaway, who at the time worked for another ticket brokerage in the area. Fryer continued to steal and sell tickets to Conaway for every subsequent U.S. Open through 2019, and he would have stolen tickets to the 2020 U.S. Open except it was held without fans that year due to the pandemic. Further, in connection with the 2017 U.S. Open, the defendant also sold stolen U.S. Open tickets to Bell, who operated another local area ticket brokerage. All told, Fryer admitted to stealing more than \$3 million worth of U.S. Open tickets and selling them for approximately \$1.2 million to his two co-conspirators, who themselves sold the tickets for a profit.

"This defendant stole revenue from an American institution and legitimate business that pays taxes, employs many, supports a non-profit organization, and brings excitement and income to our district with U.S. Open events at courses like the Merion Golf Club," said U.S. Attorney Williams. "Criminals that conduct ticket schemes like this prey on the excitement surrounding big events; fans should remember that any item with a low price that seems 'too good to be true' should be cause for caution and concern."

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Michael S. Lowe.

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Wendy writes for the United States Press Agency and is a former columnist with the Fulton County Expositor, Wauseon, Ohio.

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