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Final Edition

**Blago quiet in court; 'I learned a lot of lessons . . . probably the biggest . . . that I talk too much'**

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Staff reporters

He said he'd fight until the day he died.

He said he'd swear on the holy Bible and take the witness stand.

He said prosecutors should "play all the tapes," and even chided U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald for not being "man enough," if he personally didn't show up in court.

But after all those months of bluster, reality set in for former Gov. Rod Blagojevich, who on Wednesday took a pass at talking to jurors in his corruption trial.

In the end, Rod Blagojevich put up no defense.

His team rested its case without calling a single witness -- and without playing a single tape.

Minutes after making his decision, Rod Blagojevich returned to his more desired role as celebrity politician. He put his foot up on a courtroom bench and signed autographs for spectators.

After privately huddling with his lawyers for nearly an hour after court broke Wednesday, the former governor pleaded his case from a more safe and more comfortable position: in front of TV cameras.

Blagojevich squeezed into a packed media pit in the federal courthouse lobby holding the hand of his wife, Patti. He then asserted that the government "proved my innocence" and his decision not to testify -- and not to call any witnesses -- was a reflection of scant prosecutorial evidence.

"The government proved I never took a corrupt dollar. I never took a corrupt dime, not a corrupt nickel, not a corrupt penny," the former governor said. "The government played some of the tapes . . . they proved I sought the advice of my lawyers and my advisers," he continued. "They proved I was on the phone talking with them, brainstorming about ideas. Yes, they proved some of the ideas were stupid. But they also proved some of the ideas were good."

His decision to keep quiet in court was painstaking, he said, and came only after a lengthy Monday night session in his living room with his lawyers, in particular with the "coach" of his defense team, Sam Adam Sr.

Adam and his son, Sam Adam Jr., spent more than 150 hours with the former governor, at times in a quiet park, going over his testimony and the tapes.

"The government told us their case was going to be something like four months. As a result of what they said their case was gong to be, we operated under the assumption that I was going to testify," Blagojevich said of the six-week case. He said he reluctantly took his lawyers' advice.

By talking to the media -- and not jurors -- Blagojevich can control his message and avoid possibly tripping up or undergoing rigorous prosecution questioning.

Still, his lawyers must contend with the fact that Blagojevich attorney Sam Adam Jr. promised jurors in his opening statement that they'd see [Rod Blagojevich](http://www.nexis.com/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T21276285775&returnToId=20_T21276285789&csi=11064&A=0.4081443776964331&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23PE0009ULK%23&searchTerm=Rod%20Blagojevich%20&indexType=P) tell his tale from the stand.

"As a team player, as a son, as a lawyer for the governor, you have to sit down and examine it and say to yourself one thing. . . . Is there a harm when I go back and look at them Monday and say I promised you, [and] he wasn't there? Certainly," the younger Adam said after court. "But is that harm greater than putting him on the stand and saying we think they proved you guilty, here you need to answer?"

Asked whether Blagojevich was contemplating giving his own closing argument, Sam Adam Jr. furrowed his eyebrows and shook his head.

At his media conference, Blagojevich made a vague reference to the hundreds of secretly recorded calls he was caught on, admitting he had learned that sometimes maybe it was better to keep his mouth shut. "I've learned a lot of lessons from this whole experience and probably the biggest . . . is that I talk too much."

With both sides resting, U.S. District Judge James Zagel is expected to decide this morning whether to allow charges in the case to be dismissed or proceed to closing arguments Monday.

During a hearing on that question Wednesday, Zagel said he understood the defense's basic argument that Blagojevich committed no crimes and engaged in "a lot of saying of things as opposed to doing."

But in a seeming nod to the prosecution, he noted testimony in the case that portrayed Blagojevich as "an individual who is becoming increasingly desperate over a period of time and arguably [has] lost contact with reality."

To underscore that point, Zagel alluded to the claim that Blagojevich had designs on setting up a charitable trust for which he could be the "heavy hitter and draw a high-paying salary once leaving the governorship."

"By baseball standards, a heavy hitter is a ridiculously inappropriate phrase to describe him," Zagel said. "In political terms, this was a guy who was batting .110 in the Class D minor leagues."

Zagel also appeared to show little sympathy for efforts by Blagojevich lawyer Sheldon Sorosky to keep the jury from considering as bribes the $12,000-a-month real-estate commissions convicted businessman Tony Rezko paid to Patti Blagojevich.

In considering what constitutes bribery, Zagel dug into Chicago history to the century-old case of the Everleigh sisters, who made payments to police that ostensibly kept their high-end brothel in business.

"I think that that would constitute bribery, even though you might not be able to point to a single specific action or inaction taken by those police officers," he explained. "It might be bribery over a dozen years. Here, hypothetically, six years. . . . It's still a bribe, even though it's very difficult to point to what the quo was for the quid."