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Former Philadelphia Eagles wide receiver Freddie Mitchell pleaded guilty in Orlando federal court Friday to his role in a tax fraud case, which involved recruiting at least one professional athlete as a client.

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March 08 — Former Philadelphia Eagles wide receiver Freddie Mitchell pleaded guilty in Orlando federal court Friday to his role in a tax fraud case, which involved recruiting at least one professional athlete as a client.

The Internal Revenue Service began investigating Mitchell and co-defendants Jamie Russ-Walls and Richard Walls in 2009, when an attorney reported that a nearly \$2 million tax refund was filed in the name of his client, a professional athlete identified as "A.G.," without his permission.

Mitchell, who grew up in Polk County, attended UCLA and played four seasons for the Eagles, admitted in his plea agreement that he became friends with A.G. when they both lived in Central Florida.

Mitchell falsely told A.G. in July 2009 that Russ-Walls prepared his taxes and he received a \$1 million refund. Mitchell said Russ-Walls could also get A.G. money back from the IRS.

A.G. agreed to consider Mitchell's proposal, the agreement said, but never authorized Mitchell, Russ-Walls or her husband Walls to file a tax return on his behalf.

On Sept. 16, 2009, Russ-Walls filed a fraudulent tax form in A.G.'s name, the plea agreement said. The return listed an inflated refund amount of nearly \$2 million.

In addition to the false tax paperwork, Mitchell, Russ-Walls and Walls submitted

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Mitchell's last-minute plea came just days before he was slated to go to trial. Defense attorney Kyle Fletcher had to file a motion Wednesday asking it be accepted outside the allotted time.

On Friday, Mitchell told U.S. Magistrate Judge Thomas B. Smith he knew fraud was being committed and yet he did not stop the illegal activities or report it to law enforcement.

Mitchell, 34, pleaded guilty to a count of conspiracy to file a false claim with the government. He faces up to 10 years in prison and will be sentenced at a later date.

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