

Man Sentenced in Boston for Sending Death Threats to Dozens of Professional and College Athletes

A California man was sentenced Friday, November 1 in federal court in Boston for sending death threats to at least 45 professional and collegiate athletes between July and December 2017.

Addison Choi, 23, of Fullerton, Calif., was sentenced by U.S. District Court Chief Judge Patti B. Saris to 18 months in prison, one year of supervised release, and a fine of \$5,500. In July 2019, Choi pleaded guilty to one count of transmitting in interstate and foreign commerce a threat to injure the person of another.

“The anonymity and ease of internet-based communications has led to a steady decline in civility and a steady increase in internet-based threats and harassment,” said United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling. “Choi is a perfect example, lobbing violent, racist threats at others who failed to meet his expectations. We will continue to prosecute those who use the Internet to threaten violence.”

“In the realm of social media, there were no firewalls to protect the famous from being burned by Addison Choi’s vitriol and the keyboard he weaponized. His victims – sports heroes to many – were threatened with death by Choi for failing to perform to his expectations on their chosen fields of play, all while he lurked in anonymity,” said Joseph R. Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Boston Division. “Today’s sentence is meant to teach Choi a lesson, and send a message to others that the FBI takes all acts and threats of violence

seriously.”

In 2017, Choi attended college in Wellesley where he played varsity soccer. He also gambled prolifically on sports, both professional and collegiate. When the players or teams that he bet on performed poorly, Choi used Instagram to send them death threats. For example, on July 27, 2017, Choi posted on one professional athlete’s Instagram account: “I will kill you and your family and f***** hang them on a tree you stupid ugly mother*****” and also “I hope you f***** die you stupid monkey n*****.” On the same day, Choi posted on another athlete’s Instagram account: “I’ll find your f***** family and skin them alive you stupid f***, I hope you never play again.”

Choi also posted threats on the accounts of athletes’ loved ones. In another instance, Choi posted on the Instagram page of a professional athlete’s girlfriend, “You stupid mother***** [name], you worthless f***. I will f***** kill you,” and “I will f***** kill [name] you dumb f***** bitch... leave that irrelevant stupid mother*****.”

Between July 2017 and December 2017, Choi posted threats to at least 45 different Instagram accounts, with multiple threats to each account and often multiple targets per threat.

U.S. Attorney Lelling and FBI Boston SAC Bonavolonta made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Scott L. Garland, of Lelling’s Civil Rights Enforcement Team, and Gregory J. Dorchak, of Lelling’s Civil Rights Unit, prosecuted the case.