

Bruschi hires Blank as agent

By MIKE REISS
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Recovering from a mild stroke, Patriots linebacker Tedy Bruschi has reached out for help by hiring Boston-based sports agent Brad Blank, according to NFL Players Association documents.

Blank, a senior attorney who has been certified with the union since 1985, refused comment when contacted yesterday.

Bruschi, 31, hadn't employed an agent in more than five years as he negotiated multiple new contracts or restructured contracts on his own. The latest self-negotiated deal came last June when he signed a four-year, \$8.1 million extension.

Yet given Bruschi's recent health scare, the hiring of Blank is likely less about new contracts, and more about having an adviser to guide him through a difficult time. The belief is that Bruschi is still in the decision-making process regarding his status for next

season and beyond, and the hiring of Blank would certainly give him some direction through any legal and contractual waters.

Bruschi, the Patriots' defensive captain, has yet to speak about his medical condition since being admitted to Massachusetts General Hospital Feb. 16. Through Patriots spokesman Stacey James, he's asked for the media to respect his privacy.

The most recent report on Bruschi's condition came from television station KOLD in Arizona, which aired a report March 16 that the former University of Arizona star had a hole in his heart.

Bruschi, who appeared in his first Pro Bowl last month, faces an uncertain future despite reaching the pinnacle of his profession. He played in 19 games last season (including playoffs), recording 128 tackles and three interceptions.

Blank represents one other Patriot — fourth-year wide receiver David Givens.