

# The conman who just can't stop pretending he's a lawyer: Self-styled 'Devil's Advocate' tells judge 'I am obliged, my Lord' as he's jailed for 14 years

The Daily Mail



*"In a democratic society we must accept the verdict because although the criminal justice system is not the best and probably not the fairest – It is all we have.*

*We must accept the system and accept any verdict no matter how much it can be contested.*

*We must also accept the verdict not as a final result or even whether one is guilty or innocent but as an indication and prospective of a better and fairer system to come.*

*The real Judge and Jury will be history not people". Giovanni di Stefano 28/3/2013.*

I rather think the length of the sentence has more to do with who he is than the severity of the crimes. Check out his website: [www.onlinepublishingcompany.info](http://www.onlinepublishingcompany.info)

Mark my words, you have not heard the last of Stefano... Unless of course he is silenced.

Watch this space.

- Giovanni di Stefano, 57, earned nickname for taking on difficult cases
- But despite no legal training, he won some of his cases
- He said he had links to Robert Mugabe, Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein
- Di Stefano also claimed to be friends with Slobodan Milosevic's daughter

By [SUZANNAH HILLS](#)

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A bogus lawyer has been sentenced 14 years in prison for duping 'desperate and vulnerable victims' into thinking he was a bona fide legal professional.

Giovanni di Stefano, 57, became known as the Devil's Advocate for taking on 'unwinnable' cases with a client list including road rage killer Kenneth Noye and timeshare fraudster John

'Goldfinger' Palmer.

Despite no legal training, the fraudster managed to win some of his cases. But his high-flying legal career was brought to an abrupt end when he was convicted of 25 charges including deception, fraud and money laundering between 2001 and 2011.



Behind bars: Giovanni di Stefano, pictured arriving at Southwark Crown Court ahead of his sentencing for fraud, was today jailed for 14 years



No ordinary lawyer: Giovanni di Stefano built up a reputation for defending the seemingly indefensible. Now he has been convicted on 25 charges including deception, fraud and money laundering

Today di Stefano, who was briefly a director of Dundee FC in 2003, pleaded guilty to another two counts of fraud and a further three counts were ordered to lie on file at London's Southwark Crown Court.

As he stepped out of the dock after hearing his sentence, di Stefano told the judge in a loud voice: 'I am obliged, my Lord'.

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- [Police auction off 32 pairs of designer shoes and Tiffany jewellery bought by company secretary who conned bosses out of £320,000](#)
- [Conman made thousands claiming to collect unwanted clothes for a children's charity but was caught after misspelling its name as 'Bernhardos' on donation bags](#)

Judge Alistair McCreath, the Recorder of Westminster, noted there were many offences over significant periods of time.

He said the fact that the victims, which included a disabled man seeking damages for the loss of an arm, were all 'desperate and vulnerable' and faced losses which were not just financial but also included the 'raising and dashing of false hope' were aggravating factors.

The 57-year-old conned clients out of millions of pounds by setting himself up as a lawyer when he had no legal qualifications and was not registered to work as a lawyer in Italy or the UK.

He used the Italian word 'avvocato' on business cards, letterheads and identification documents to give clients – and the judiciary – the impression he was an advocate.



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Giovanni Di Stefano as he arrives back at Southwark Crown Court to face charges of fraud



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Giovanni di Stefano has represented some of Britain's most notorious criminals



Gi  
ovanni Di Stefano acted for Patrick 'Dutchy' Holland, a career  
Irish criminal, best known for being the first person accused  
of killing Irish investigative journalist Veronica Guerin,  
which he denied until his death

The judge told di Stefano: 'I recognise that you did not  
actively seek out those whom you defrauded. They came to you.  
You did not approach them but there is more than one kind of  
predator.

'Some predators hunt down their victims, others lie in wait

for them.

'Your victims in this case were all desperate people and people who, because of their desperation, were vulnerable.'

The judge also noted that, while this case is about money, 'it is also about something different and great – it is about the real distress you caused to so many people'.

'You had no regard for them nor for their anguish,' he said. 'Your only concern was to line your own pockets.'

During the trial, di Stefano told of his links to Robert Mugabe, Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein and his 'friendship' with the daughter of Slobodan Milosevic.

The court was shown a 2004 BBC documentary in which he described Saddam as a 'nice guy' and boasted of being asked to defend killers such as Jeremy Bamber, Harold Shipman, Kenneth Noye and Linda Calvey.

He was born in the small town of Petrella Tifernina in central Italy, but moved to the UK as a boy and went to school in Wollaston, Northamptonshire.

Prosecutor David Aaronberg QC had told the jury that di Stefano had gained fame for handling clients 'whose cases others considered unwinnable or too difficult to defend'.

But he did in fact win some cases, overturning a manslaughter conviction against Nicholas van Hoogstraten in 2002 and getting him released from prison.

In 2003, Di Stefano secured the release of John 'Goldfinger' Palmer from prison on a technicality, with only a fine of £33million for timeshare fraud, which Palmer later avoided paying.



Not best director: Di Stefano was briefly on the board at Dundee



Former Dundee director Giovanni di Stefano (right) pictured at a press conference with team manager Jim Duffy (left) and new signing Fabrizio Ravanelli



Pop guru Jonathan King (centre), who was convicted of a series of sexual assaults on teenage boys, with his lawyer Giovanni di Stefano

The harm that di Stefano inflicted was 'in financial terms alone high', said the judge.

But he added: 'In terms of emotional harm, it was much greater – the building of false hopes, always and inevitably dashed, followed by years of misery and frustration as they tried to recover what you had stolen and in the end were forced to come to terms with their financial loss.'

The judge said di Stefano had 'lied' to his victims about what he was capable of and who he was.

His crimes were 'planned and persistent' and some of his attempts to defend his behaviour in court amounted to 'breathtaking cynicism', the judge noted.

Di Stefano, of North Stream, Marshside, Canterbury, Kent, was found guilty of nine counts of obtaining a money transfer by deception, eight counts of fraud, three counts of acquiring

criminal property, two counts of using a false instrument, one count of attempting to obtain a money transfer by deception, one count of obtaining property by deception and one count of using criminal property.

Today he pleaded guilty to stealing £150,000 compensation that should have gone to a man who had lost an arm in a car crash.

The money was due as part of an insurance policy but di Stefano had it paid in to his business account and 'duly stole it'.

The court was told it was a 'wicked' crime and is one which 'stands in a league of its own'.

The bogus lawyer also admitted defrauding engineer David Brown and his family of £160,000 including the £75,000 life savings of his partner's mother. This case also involved £20,000 costs which were not paid out.

Due to the 'utterly wrong' advice that di Stefano gave him – 'to protect your own position' – he lost his home and his job.

Read

more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2300544/Giovanni-di-Stefano-jailed-14-years-The-conman-just-stop-pretending-hes-lawyer.html#ixzz20tjR0q7d>

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