

# New video shows James Dolan ordered Charles Oakley's ejection, gave 'thumbs up' after melee: lawyer

 [nydailynews.com/sports/basketball/knicks/new-video-shows-dolan-ordered-oakley-msg-ejection-lawyer-article-1.4007272](https://www.nydailynews.com/sports/basketball/knicks/new-video-shows-dolan-ordered-oakley-msg-ejection-lawyer-article-1.4007272)

James Dolan ordered Charles Oakley's ugly ejection from Madison Square Garden last year and then gave a "thumbs up" after the fracas, court papers argue, citing new arena security footage obtained by the Daily News.

Moments before the beloved Knick's confrontation broadcast on national television, Dolan is seen chatting with a security official and then giving him a signal, Oakley's attorney Douglas Wigdor writes in new papers filed Wednesday.

"From the moment he takes his seat Mr. Oakley can be seen laughing and casually interacting with fans. Nowhere is there evidence that he was acting as belligerently as (Dolan and MSG) falsely claim," papers submitted by Wigdor read.

"During a stoppage in play, Defendant Dolan can be seen summoning a security guard and speaking to him at length... Within seconds of Defendant Dolan's gesture, the security guard gathered other security personnel who proceeded to surround Mr. Oakley and throw him out of the Arena."

Once the notorious melee has ended and security guards take Oakley, 54, into a tunnel to be arrested, Dolan appears to give a "thumbs up," according to papers.

"When the guards were finished assaulting Mr. Oakley and violently ejecting him from MSG, Defendant Dolan can be seen giving a thumbs up to the security guards," papers read.

Dolan's company released a statement Thursday afternoon dismissing the Daily News' video and the plaintiff's claims as "nothing more than Oakley's latest attempt to distract from the real reasons why he was ejected.

"We like the videos — they show what actually happened, which is why Oakley's lawyer continues to fight to exclude them from the court case," the statement from the Madison Square Garden Company continued. "As opposed to the edited and manipulated video posted by Oakley's counsel, we filed the entire unedited video with the Court months ago. As we've stated before, we believe this suit has no merit and should be dismissed."

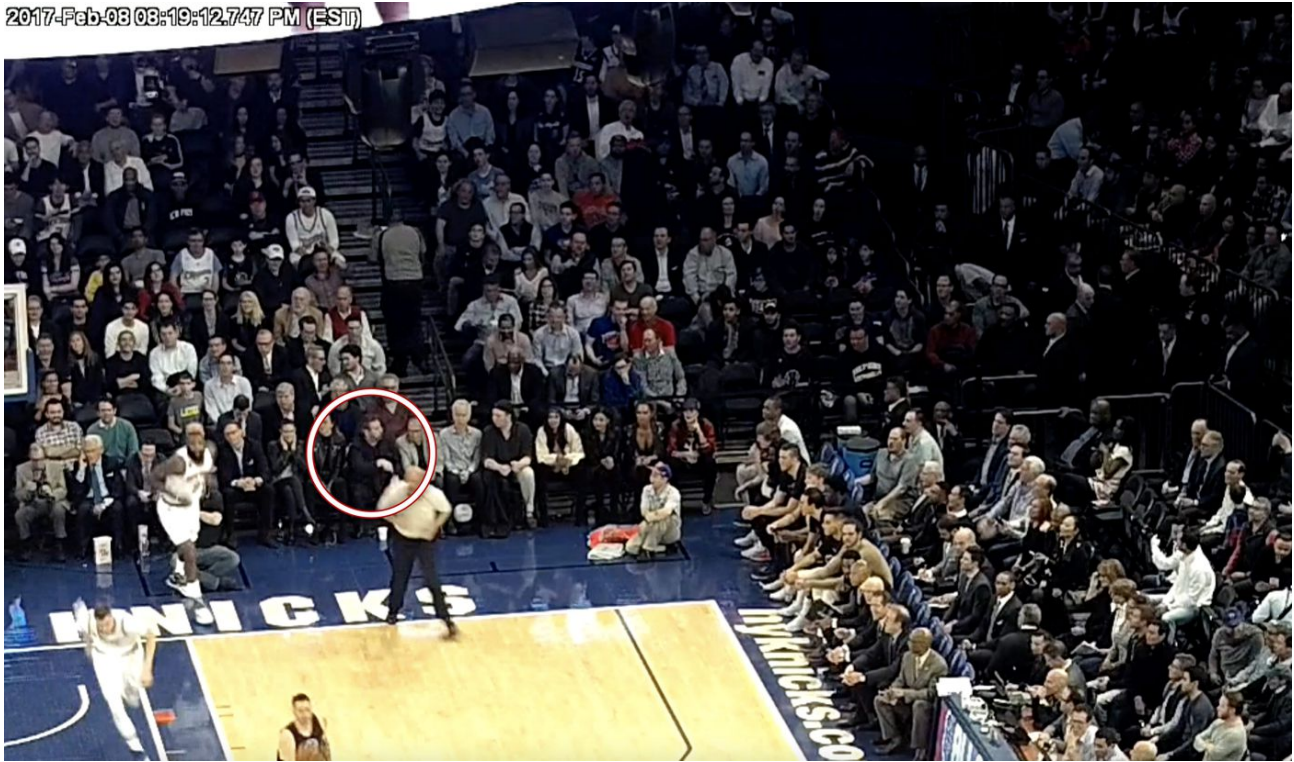
Contrary to the statement, the clip was not provided by Oakley's counsel. It was obtained through court records, then packaged by The News to highlight the arguments in Thursday's motion.

"As the Daily News has made clear, the video is a matter of public record and was not 'edited and manipulated' by our Firm as Defendants falsely claim," Wigdor said. "We find it deeply offensive that James Dolan would purposefully malign our Firm in the same way he did our

client."

The entire video from this new angle, which was submitted by Dolan's defense team in connection with Oakley's lawsuit, was also viewed by The News. As Oakley has claimed and the video confirms, he never got up from his seat before being confronted by security. Testimony from anonymous Garden employees — submitted by the Garden — allege Oakley lashed out with multiple derogatory obscenities before and during the scuffle in February of last year, including telling one guard, "You got all those f---ing security people looking at me. I don't know what the f--- they're looking at, but they're getting on my f---ing nerves."

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James Dolan (circled) appears to gesture at security from the front row as Charles Oakley sits behind him. (Provided)

The video, however, offers few, if any, revelations about Oakley's role in the melee. What was known about his behavior — or not known — remains that way because there's no audio to verify what he said to security in the lead-up to his ejection.

But the viewpoint on Dolan is new and Wigdor believes it validates an argument central to their lawsuit: that Oakley was targeted because of a rift with the owner, not because his conduct warranted being ejected from the Garden just eight minutes after sitting down.

"Our legal papers filed today make clear that this matter should be resolved by a jury while also shining a light on Dolan's conduct that precipitated an event that could easily have been avoided if he had not signaled to his security team to remove Mr. Oakley for no legitimate reason and gleefully give a thumbs up after Mr. Oakley had been assaulted," Wigdor said in a statement.

Here's a breakdown of the video, which, from the moment Oakley sits down until he's out of the tunnel, lasts only 11 minutes:

— Oakley sits behind and to the left of Dolan, and is seen talking with smiling spectators. John McEnroe, who was seated two spots to Dolan's left, turns around to embrace Oakley.

— Oakley turns his attention to security guards in the vicinity and starts saying things in their direction (the defense alleges Oakley was yelling obscenities).

— Six minutes after Oakley sits down, Dolan appears to summon a security guard for a conversation during a timeout. The security guard crouches down to speak with Dolan.

— Two minutes later — as Oakley is seen animatedly talking in the direction of the security guard who had just spoken with Dolan — the Knicks owner puts down his cup, looks back at Oakley and gestures to that same guard by pointing his finger to the ground.

— Six security guards then surround Oakley in an attempt to eject him from the arena. He resists and pushes one security guard, then shoves another. He falls to the ground (Oakley's lawyers allege he was pushed), and continues to resist being dragged out of the arena.

— Dolan stands up and turns around to witness the melee behind him. He quickly sits back down and sips his drink. When Oakley is finally close to being removed through the tunnel, Dolan gives a thumbs-up in the direction of either McEnroe or an approaching security guard.

Both sides have argued that the videos back up their version of events.

Oakley was arrested for assault and the charge was dropped in August as part of a deal requiring he stay out of trouble for six months and away from the Garden for a year. He then filed his defamation and discrimination suit in September seeking unspecified damages.

The former All-Star argued that NBA commissioner Adam Silver would regret not punishing the Knicks owner and added that if the judge dismisses the case, "there might be a riot."

Dolan's lawyer, Randy Mastro, wrote that Oakley was an unruly fan who needed to be removed.

"We remain confident that this case should be dismissed with or without video review," Mastro wrote earlier this month. "But now it appears that Oakley himself agrees with our longstanding position that, in deciding this motion to dismiss, Your Honor should review the contemporaneous videos, which depict Oakley repeatedly striking MSG security guards and resisting their efforts with NYPD officers to escort him out of the arena."

After Oakley's arrest, Dolan — himself a recovering alcoholic — suggested the former All-Star had a drinking problem. Oakley says that claim was defamatory.

The incident brought negative and embarrassing attention to Dolan, who'd been maintaining a low profile after hiring Phil Jackson to run the Knicks. In a transparent attempt to change the narrative, Dolan brought several former players — including Latrell Sprewell — to a Garden

game just four days after the Oakley incident.