

Charles Oakley file civil suit over incident at Madison Square Garden

 [espn.com/nba/story/_/id/20676111/charles-oakley-file-civil-suit-incident-madison-square-garden](https://www.espn.com/nba/story/_/id/20676111/charles-oakley-file-civil-suit-incident-madison-square-garden)

Former [New York Knicks](#) forward [Charles Oakley](#) filed a civil suit Tuesday morning in response to a February run-in with security at Madison Square Garden and the incident's aftermath.

Oakley's civil suit names Knicks owner James Dolan, Madison Square Garden Company and MSG Sports & Entertainment and includes several causes of action, including defamation, libel and slander. It requests an award of damages to be determined at trial by a jury to compensate Oakley for emotional distress and/or mental anguish and reasonable attorneys' fees and costs.

Oakley's attorney, Alex Spiro, has stated in the past that for Oakley, the issues stemming from the incident at Madison Square Garden and its fallout have always been a matter of principle.

Oakley was arrested after a run-in with MSG security on Feb. 8 and charged with two misdemeanor counts of assault, one misdemeanor count of aggravated harassment and one misdemeanor count of trespassing. He was also cited for two additional counts of harassment that are considered noncriminal violations.

Cameras on the night of the incident showed Oakley hitting and shoving Madison Square Garden security members as they attempted to remove him from his seat. Oakley was then physically removed by the arena's security staff. The Garden released witness statements from a dozen employees who encountered Oakley that night and alleged that he was physically and verbally abusive.

Shortly after the incident, Dolan suggested that Oakley had an alcohol problem and anger management issues.

Dolan initially banned Oakley from Madison Square Garden after the incident but lifted the ban days later.

In the civil suit, Oakley alleges that Dolan, Madison Square Garden Company and MSG Sports & Entertainment committed defamation and libel by publicly accusing him of committing assault and stating publicly that he suffers from alcoholism. It also alleges that the defendants' statements were slanderous.

The suit, filed by attorneys Douglas Wigdor, Renan Varghese and Alex Hartzband, also alleges assault, battery, false imprisonment and abuse of process. In addition, the suit alleges that the defendants violated the Americans with Disabilities Act and the New York State Human Rights Law by denying Oakley access to Madison Square Garden based on their perception that he suffers from alcoholism.

Oakley played for the Knicks from 1988 to 1998 and helped them reach the 1994 NBA Finals. He has had a poor relationship with the team and Dolan in recent years, thanks in part to his criticisms of the organization and its owner. The suit references the fractured relationship between Oakley and Dolan.

"Whether it was because of resentment for Mr. Oakley's passionate following among Knicks fans, anger that Mr. Oakley would not 'kiss the ring' of the heir to the Madison Square Garden empire, or petty insecurities driven by his own personal demons, Defendant Dolan constantly disrespected Mr. Oakley, refusing to make eye contact or shake his hand during meetings, denying him the type of fan appreciation nights given to much less popular and successful members of the Knicks, and even making him purchase his own tickets to attend games at the arena he called home for a decade," the suit states.

Madison Square Garden had not provided a comment on the suit as of Tuesday morning.

Oakley last month accepted a deal -- an adjournment in contemplation of dismissal -- that will lead to the criminal

charges being dropped if he stays out of trouble for six months and complies with a condition that prohibits Oakley from trespassing at Madison Square Garden for one year.