

How Charles Oakley is using James Dolan's latest fan run-in as ammunition in defamation case



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James Dolan's latest thin-skinned display could be used against him in court.

Lawyers for Charles Oakley in his defamation suit filed a letter on Wednesday morning arguing that Dolan's banning of a fan at Madison Square Garden — as captured on video — proves that the Knicks owner “needs no such justification whatsoever to engage in the same kind of conduct to which he subjected (Oakley).”

The letter, obtained by the Daily News, alleges multiple parallels between Dolan's behavior in throwing out the fan and Oakley — including the Knicks owner summoning security, the rapid involvement of police and PR messages from the Garden blaming the banned parties. The purpose of the letter is to counter Dolan's motion to dismiss the lawsuit.

In the video published by TMZ following Sunday's game at the Garden, Dolan was shown directing security to remove and ban a fan who told the owner, “Sell the team.”

The fan was neither belligerent nor physically threatening. When confronted by Dolan, he told the billionaire he was merely expressing his opinion. Still, Dolan signified the ban by saying, “enjoy watching (the Knicks) on TV.” Then security handled the rest.

On Tuesday, Dolan defended his actions on ESPN Radio by claiming he was “ambushed” by the unidentified fan and his friends. Dolan also claimed that he was going to rescind the ban

but decided against it after seeing the TMZ story. He alleged the fans set him up for an embarrassing moment so they could sell the video.

“They were stalking me,” Dolan said.

Oakley’s ejection turned much more tense and physical. The Knicks legend was surrounded by Garden security very early in a game two years ago. He became enraged and pushed security, then was dragged out of the building in cuffs and arrested.

Video shows Dolan appearing to signal to security to eject Oakley just before the melee. After the incident, Dolan — himself a recovering alcoholic — suggested the former All-Star had a drinking problem. Oakley says that claim was defamatory and filed his defamation and discrimination suit in September of 2017 seeking unspecified damages.

The defense has claimed Oakley was an unruly fan at the game who vulgarly attacked security and needed to be removed.

The assault charges on Oakley were dropped as part of a plea deal requiring he stay out of trouble for six months and away from the Garden for a year. This week after the fan was banned, Oakley called Dolan a “bully” and made a plea for Adam Silver to discipline the owner.

“The commissioner needs to step in and do something, suspend him, something,” Oakley told The Athletic. “He can’t keep getting away with it.”