

Ref files large suit with Ali

NEW YORK (AP)—A New York referee filed a \$20-million suit Tuesday against Muhammad Ali, charging the heavy-weight boxing champion with "false, malicious and libelous" statements damaging to his career.

In the suit filed in U.S. District Court, Tony Perez, 44, referee of more than 150 professional fights, asked \$10 million in civil damages and \$10 million in punitive damages.

He charged that Ali, in comments after the March 24 fight with Chuck Wepner in Cleveland, threatened him with "a sermon of hate throughout the world" and exposed him to "public scorn and disgrace." Ali was in Florida and unavailable immediately for comment.

Perez said Ali's remarks were made in his postfight interview and in a subsequent television appearance in which he also criticized Perez's performance in the second Ali-Joe Frazier bout in New York's Madison Square Garden Jan. 28, 1974.

Perez refereed both fights. Ali outpointed Frazier in 12 rounds and stopped Wepner with 20 seconds remaining in the 15th round after being floored in the ninth.

Perez's suit said that during the Ali-Wepner bout Ali protested that Wepner was throwing rabbit punches—illegal blows to the back of the head—and then began throwing deliberate rabbit punches on his own.

"Throughout the fight, the champion called the plaintiff derogatory names and also slurred the challenger, Wepner," Perez added.

According to the suit, Ali, after the fight, called Perez "a dirty dog" and cast aspersions on Perez' Puerto Rican heritage, saying, "He's not black and he's not white. He is more black than white but he is trying to be white."

The referee said Ali repeated the remarks in an appearance with broadcaster Howard Cosell on ABC's Wide World of Sports March 29 that gave the impression that Perez was "dishonest and had committed a crime and was untrustworthy to discharge his duties as referee."

The suit refers to Ali's comments on the wild second round of the second Ali-Frazier fight in which Ali buckled Frazier's legs with a right to the jaw near the end of the second round.

Perez stopped the fight with 15 seconds left in the round, thinking he had heard the bell. Realizing there had been no bell, he motioned the fighters back into action. But time quickly ran out.

In his suit, Perez quotes Ali as telling the national TV audience:

"I had the man knocked out and he was almost ready to fall and he Perez stopped it and said the bell rung and made a mistake and the damn bell didn't ring, messing me up from knocking out Joe Frazier."

"I had Joe Frazier going and the whole world saw it and he stopped the fight and said, 'Go to your corners, pretending that he thought the bell had rung. That wasn't it. He didn't want me to knock out Joe Frazier.'"

Phillies nip New York in 11 innings

NEW YORK (AP)—Tony Taylor's pinch double in the 11th inning scored the winning run Thursday as the Philadelphia Phillies edged the New York Mets 3-2.

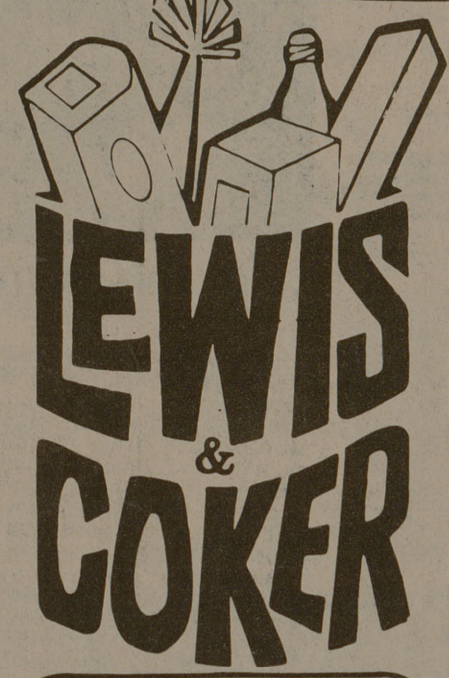
Jay Johnstone had opened the 11th with a pinch walk against reliever Harry Parker, who had weaved his way out of a bases-loaded, none-out threat two innings earlier. After Alan Bannister forced Johnstone, Taylor delivered his decisive hit.

Rusty Staub's pinch double keyed a two-run rally that tied the score for the Mets in the bottom of the eighth.

Jim Lonborg had limited the Mets to one hit until the eighth when Del Unser opened with an infield single. After Jerry Grote rolled out, Ed Kranepool delivered a pinch single, sending Unser to third.

Then Staub's double scored Unser and knocked out Lonborg. Reliever Gene Garber walked Gene Clines, loading the bases, and Felix Millan's infield out scored pinch runner Jack Heidemann with the tying run.

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