

SPORTS

SPREWELL ARBITRATION HEARING BEGINS IN PORTLAND



P.J. Carlesimo Head Coach for the Golden State Warriors.

Latrell Sprewell's immediate NBA future begins with an arduous arbitration hearing in Portland that will determine if his one-year league suspension for assaulting former coach P.J. Carlesimo was proper punishment or too harsh.

Independent arbitrator John Feerick, dean of Fordham University Law School, will hear arguments both from attorneys for the NBA and the NBA Players Association. In addition, Feerick will hear testimony and depositions from a handful of Sprewell's former teammates on the Golden State Warriors. Some of

Carlesimo's former players with the Portland Trail Blazers could testify.

Sprewell initially was suspended a minimum of 10 games without pay for twice attacking Carlesimo at a practice December 1st. Two days later, the Warriors terminated Sprewell's contract, which had two-plus years and nearly \$25 million remaining. The NBA then banned Sprewell for one year and Players Association executive director Billy Hunter filed an appeal.

In a teleconference Sunday, the sides exchanged witness lists and Feerick opted not to impose a gag order, which the NBA and the Warriors wanted. Following each day, it will be revealed who testified and for how long, but no other details will be made available.

Executives, attorneys and witnesses for both sides will gather at the PacWest Center in Portland today through Friday. Additional days already have been scheduled for February 3rd-4th in New York. Feerick has 30 days to make his ruling and it is believed he will not rule quickly.

While the NBA merely wants Feerick to uphold its ban of Sprewell — the longest non-drug suspension in league history — the NBPA wants Sprewell reinstated with his contractual rights. That is considered a long shot, with a more likely outcome al-

lowing the former All-Star to return at the beginning of next season.

Arbitrators often use precedent in their rulings in these cases. Although there never has been a situation in which an NBA player has attacked a coach, there have been incidents in which players have attacked other team employees, including an incident early this season in which former Phoenix Suns forward Tom Chambers attacked the trainer.

Prior to Sprewell's ban, the longest suspensions for violence in league history were 26 games given to Kermit Washington for punching opponent Rudy Tomjanovich during a game in 1977; 11 games given to Dennis Rodman for kicking an courtside cameraman last year; and 10 games to Vernon Maxwell for going into the stands in Portland and attacking a heckler in 1995. Sprewell already has missed 26 games.

The union also believes there is conflicting testimony regarding whether Sprewell punched Carlesimo when he returned to practice after the initial attack 20 minutes earlier. Hunter said that six Warriors have stated that Sprewell did not throw a punch at Carlesimo, although Warriors management and numerous accounts of the incident have said otherwise.

The hearing is being held in Portland because the Warriors visit the

Trail Blazers tonight. Sprewell and Carlesimo both will give testimony, as will Warriors players and executives. The union may request Blazers who played under Carlesimo to testify to the coach's style, which some have called abrasive.

Representing Sprewell will be Hunter; NBPA chief counsel Bob Lanza, who will try the case; associate counsel Ron Klempner; deputy counsel Hal Biagas; and Jeffrey Kessler, who headed the failed union decertification movement in 1995.

The NBA will counter with executive vice president and chief legal officer Jeffrey Mishkin and private attorneys Howard Ganz and Frank Rothman, both former colleagues of NBA commissioner David Stern. Stern

and deputy commissioner Russ Granik are not expected to be directly involved in the proceedings.

For the most part, Sprewell has kept a low profile since the incident. He apologized but did not answer questions during a news conference in Oakland on December 9th that was attended by Hunter, agent Arn Tellem, several of his former teammates and a handful of attorneys, including Johnnie Cochran Jr., who will not sit in on the hearings.

Sprewell has been playing unorganized basketball in the Bay area. He not accepted any offers to play elsewhere during his suspension, including one from the Atlantic City Seagulls of the USBL that called for him to earn the median U.S. household income of \$592.04 per week.

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Broncos' offensive line dominant in Super Bowl XXXII

By JOHN PEZZULLO
SPORTS TICKET NFL EDITOR

Action always speaks louder than words.

When Super Bowl week began, the offensive line of the Denver Broncos became a story because of their refusal to speak to the media. But in the end, they made the loudest noise as the Broncos stunned the Green Bay Packers, 31-24, in Super Bowl

XXXII Sunday.

"That was pretty good for the lightest line in the NFL," said Broncos quarterback John Elway. "They controlled the line of scrimmage and out-physicalled Green Bay."

All week, the Broncos had to hear how their offensive line was too small to handle the Packers. How can a line with an average size of just under 6-5 and 290 pounds deal with a

Packers' defensive front which features 345-pound Gilbert Brown and 304-pound Reggie White?

"All we heard was how we couldn't run on them," said Broncos' left guard Mark Schlereth, who previously earned a Super Bowl ring with the Washington Redskins.

"I was thinking, 'Heck, we have run on everybody all season long. What is the difference?' But that is

why you play the game, to show people that what experts say is not necessarily true."

"It kind of ticked us off a little bit," said left tackle Gary Zimmerman. "We had to bite our tongues."

We pride ourselves on being a running team."

The fact is, the line consistently opened holes for Super Bowl MVP Terrell Davis.

SPORTS STANDINGS WINTER STANDINGS 1997/98

BOYS

BASKETBALL	W	L
Benson	5	0
Wilson	5	0
Jefferson	4	1
Cleveland	3	2
Franklin	2	3
Grant	2	3
Lincoln	2	3
Marshall	1	4
Roosevelt	1	4
Madison	0	5

GIRLS

BASKETBALL	W	L
Jefferson	6	0
Lincoln	5	1
Benson	4	1
Wilson	3	1
Grant	4	2
Franklin	3	2
Cleveland	1	5
Marshall	1	5
Madison	0	6
Roosevelt	0	6

WRESTLING

	W	L
Benson	4	0
Franklin	2	0
Grant	2	0
Madison	3	1
Cleveland	1	1
Wilson	1	1
Jefferson	1	2
Marshall	0	2
Lincoln	0	3
Roosevelt	0	4

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