

SPORTS

Multi-Cultural Hall of Fame to induct class

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—Thad Spencer moves slowly, his body aching from years of punishment in the ring and fast living outside it. But he accomplished a lot in his boxing career, and he feels he never has been rewarded. So he's taken out his frustration with the Oregon Sports Hall of Fame, which he regards as biased against people of color, and started an alternative.

The Oregon Multi-Cultural Sports Hall of Fame will induct its first class of athletes Sunday night, led by former NFL great Mel Renfro. Missing from the group of seven will be Spencer himself.

"If people think I went out and started my own hall of fame just so I could induct myself, they're crazy," he said. "This is so Oregon athletes can have a place where their grandkids can go see what they did."

Spencer has been working on the idea of the hall of fame for more than two years, but

Renfro is the centerpiece. A star at Portland's Jefferson High School and the University of Oregon, Renfro had a terrific career with the Dallas Cowboys that earned him a spot in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Also being inducted is basketball player Freeman Williams, former Jefferson High and Arizona State football player Woody Green, ex-Trail Blazer LeRoy Ellis, former Oregon State basketball player Jim Jarvis, and former boxers Denny Moyer and Ray Lampkin.

Spencer is bitter about being left out of the Oregon Sports Hall of Fame, which has inducted some of the state's most prominent sports figures, like Danny Ainge and Phil Knight. He was among 40 nominees this year, but was not among the top six voted in by membership this summer.

Spencer said, however, that his motivation is to see that the feats of people of color

are recognized. He and Renfro, both of whom are black, say the Oregon Hall has overlooked too many athletes.

"I don't care what color you are," Spencer said. "A lot of people told me we should start a black hall of fame, but if I did that I'd be just as bad as they are."

Spencer, 57, grew up in Portland and became one of the most successful heavyweights of the 1960s. He compiled a 51-7-1 professional record and had a chance to win Muhammad Ali's title, which was stripped when he refused to be drafted and go to Vietnam. In 1967, Spencer beat Ernie Terrell but was then knocked out in 12 rounds by Jerry Quarry.

After his career ended, Spencer nearly ruined his life through cocaine addiction. In 1975, he was shot five times during a bar dispute before he scrambled after the gun and shot his assailant dead.

It is partly because of his seedy past that Spencer believes he has not been welcomed into the Oregon Sports Hall of Fame.

"It should be about what you've done for sports in Oregon, not anything else," he said.

Three of Spencer's inductees are in the Oregon Sports Hall of Fame: Renfro and Moyer (1983) and Jarvis (1987).

The Oregon Sports Hall of Fame has 18 people of color among its 264 individuals, said operations director Janice Carter.

"Regrettably, that is not enough," she said. "But a lot of our inductees were from the earlier part of the 1900s, when there were not as many African-American athletes as there were later on."

Carter said the induction total does not include teams that were enshrined, such as the 1977 NBA champion Trail Blazers, 1967 Oregon State football team and 1980-81 Oregon State University basketball squad.

Federal court dismisses Sprewell lawsuit against NBA

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Calling it a "baseless complaint," a federal appeals court declined last week to reinstate Latrell Sprewell's \$30 million suit against the NBA and his former team, the Golden State Warriors.

An arbitrator cut Sprewell's suspension from a year to 68 games and overturned the Warriors' decision to terminate the last three years of his contract.

The legal action followed a 1997 spat with coach P.J. Carlesimo during a practice in which witnesses said the player grabbed the coach around the neck and threatened to kill him.

Sprewell's suit claimed he was the victim of racial discrimination and said the arbitrator only could uphold or reject the suspension in its entirety.

U.S. District Judge Vaughn Walker first dismissed the suit in 1998, saying its allegations were too vague to prove any legal violations. He said Sprewell should consider dropping the case, but gave him one more chance to make his allegations more specific.

Walker dismissed the new complaint last year, saying the refiled suit was virtually the same as the first, meritless suit.

Sprewell's claims, even if proven, would not show that the Warriors or the league were motivated by racism, Walker said.

And even if racial bias were shown, the judge said, Sprewell failed to demonstrate "a public policy that

specifically militates against suspension of an employee who violently attacks his employer."

A three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco agreed last Tuesday with Walker, who said the arbitrator had reasonably concluded that Sprewell's punishment was authorized by the union contract.

"We are obviously pleased with court's decision and trust that this will finally bring an end to these allegations," said Rick Buchanan, the NBA's vice president and general counsel.

According to witnesses at Sprewell's arbitration hearing, the all-star guard grabbed Carlesimo around the neck and threatened to kill him.

After they were separated and Sprewell left the floor to shower and change, he re-

turned and, according to witnesses, punched Carlesimo and threatened him again.

The Warriors initially suspended him for 10 games, then terminated the last three years and \$24 million of his contract.

The league increased the suspension to a year. But arbitrator John Feerick, after a lengthy hearing, ruled the punishment excessive and ordered Sprewell reinstated. He was later traded to the New York Knicks.

Sprewell said the 68-game suspension cost him \$6.4 million in salary.

His suit sought the return of \$5.4 million as well as additional damages.

He argued that his punishment was not authorized by the league's union agreement, and accused NBA investigators of destroying interview notes and doctoring evidence.

The suit's main racial discrimination claim noted that Phoenix Suns forward Tom Chambers, who is white, was not suspended for punching an assistant coach a few weeks before Sprewell, who is black, attacked Carlesimo.

The arbitrator examined the Chambers incident and

others cited by Sprewell and found that differing punishments were based on the seriousness of the offense, not the race of the player, the judge said.

The appeals panel also upheld Walker's demand that Sprewell's lawyers pay \$153,000.

Walker told the lawyers to pay \$113,000 to the NBA's lawyers for their costs of defending against the suit, \$35,000 to the Golden State Warriors' lawyers for defense costs and \$5,000 to the U.S. District Court in San Francisco for "this waste of judicial resources."

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