

Simpson: I deserve scorn for book

LOS ANGELES (AP) - O.J. Simpson says the only thing he is guilty of is trying to get out of debt and provide for his children.

The former football star said in interviews with The Associated Press that he deserved criticism for his part in the "If I Did It" book and interview deal. He said any profit from the book would be "blood money," but he needed to pay his bills.

"It's all blood money and, unfortunately, I had to join the jackals," Simpson said, referring to authors of books about him. "It helped me get out of debt and secure my homestead."

The book, said to describe how he hypothetically would have killed ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman, had been scheduled for release this week following the airing of a two-part Simpson interview on Fox that was set to air on Monday and Wednesday.

News Corp., owner of Fox Broadcasting and publisher HarperCollins, canceled the project last week after it was condemned as revolting and exploitive.

In interviews with the AP, Simpson denied committing the murders, disputed his publisher's contention that the book amounts to a confession, insisted the title was not his idea, and said the hypothetical sections were writ-

ten by his ghostwriter.

News Corp. spokesman Andrew Butcher said the company paid \$880,000 to a third party in connection with the project. Of that amount, \$100,000 was to go to the book's ghostwriter and the rest to Simpson's children.

"Absolutely no money was ever given to O.J. Simpson by us," Butcher said last Wednesday.

Simpson would not say how much he was paid in advance, but said it was less than the \$3.5 million that has been reported. He said the money already has been spent, some of it on tax obligations.

Butcher said News Corp. cannot recoup any of the money because Simpson honored his end of the contract by producing the book.

Acquitted of murder in 1995, Simpson was later found liable in a wrongful-death lawsuit filed by Goldman's family. The former football star has not paid the \$33.5 million civil judgment, and his NFL pension and Florida home cannot be seized.

He made no apologies for the book and TV deal: "I've been pimped for 12 years. Everyone's made money on me."

In the AP interviews, Simpson was bitter toward the Goldman's, who consider him a murderer and continue to try to collect the judgment.

"They have become professional victims. America, you're being duped by these people," Simpson said.

Goldman attorney Jonathan G. Polak said the family will work to "place Simpson in a 'virtual' jail cell, from which he will never emerge. If that means pursuing him until his last day on this earth, then they are prepared to do precisely that."

Simpson said he was convinced the book would have been a best-seller.

"If I Did It" cracked the

Top 20 of Amazon.com two weekends ago in pre-publication sales, but by early last week, when it was canceled, the book had fallen to No. 51.

Responding to concerns from HarperCollins, eBay spokesman Hani Durzy said Wednesday that the online auction house has been removing purported copies of the book from the site.

Brown family attorney Natasha Roit said, "The voice of the American public was heard loud and clear by News Corp. and HarperCollins in recalling

the books."

"We really need to stem the tide and get these books out of circulation because anything that's out there now is really hurtful to family."

Simpson, 59, said he deserved harsh criticism for his role in the project, but complained that News Corp. owner Rupert Murdoch got off easy.

"I'm taking heat and I deserve it," Simpson said. "But Murdoch should not be taking the high road either."

Publisher Judith Regan has portrayed the book as

"O.J.'s confession," and it contains a chapter in which he explains how he could have committed the killings. But Simpson said he did not write that section.

Simpson said he told the publishing company he would not allow publication if the book contained graphic descriptions of "cutting or stabbing."

He said he wanted it made clear he was not the killer: "I didn't do it. I made it clear I didn't do it. But I didn't doubt that Ms. Regan thought I did it."

Memphis mayor readies for bout

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) - It won't be the "Thrilla in Manila," but Mayor Willie Herenton promises a good show when he steps into the ring with former heavyweight champion Joe Frazier.

The mayor, a 66-year-old former amateur boxer, and 62-year-old "Smokin' Joe" are fighting a three-round exhibition bout this week for charity.

More than 30 years removed from his legendary 1975 battle against Muhammad Ali in the Philippines, Frazier said he had no intention "to do too much damage on the mayor."

Frazier said, "He don't play too rough, then I won't play too rough," speaking to WMC-TV as he arrived at the Memphis airport Tuesday night.

Frazier, who held the heavyweight title from 1968 to 1973 and retired from boxing in 1976, runs a gym in Philadelphia and stages occasional exhibition bouts.

The exhibition at the Peabody Hotel in downtown Memphis will raise money for the city's drug court, which offers rehabilitation services to drug abusers as an alternative to jail.

Herenton turned to boxing while growing up in poverty in Memphis and credits the sport with building the self-confidence that helped him become the city's first Black mayor. He's now in his fourth term.

The mayor, who helped bring the Lennox Lewis-Mike Tyson heavyweight title fight to Memphis in 2002, has been having fun promoting his match with Frazier and talking about his accomplishments as an amateur boxer.

"If they can see me at this age, can they imagine what I was like in my teens? I was awesome," he said with a laugh.

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