

Knicks coach guilty of sex harassment

(AP) - In an end to a salacious three-week trial, a jury ordered the owners of the New York Knicks to pay \$11.6 million to a former team executive who endured crude insults and unwanted advances from coach Isiah Thomas.

The jury of four women and three men found Thomas and Madison Square Garden sexually harassed Anucha Browne Sanders, but it decided only MSG and chairman James Dolan should pay for harassing and firing Browne Sanders from her \$260,000-a-year job out of spite.

The result: The Garden owes \$6 million for condoning a hostile work environment and \$2.6 million for retaliation.

Dolan owes \$3 million. Though Thomas is off the hook for any damages, he leaves the case with a tarnished image.

Outside court, a beaming Browne Sanders insisted her victory was more about sending a message than the money.

"What I did here, I did for every working woman in America," she said.

"And that includes everyone who gets up and goes to work in the morning, everyone working in a corporate environment."

Earlier, Thomas emerged from the federal courthouse

in lower Manhattan with his trademark smile but flashed anger as he reasserted his innocence amid a crush of reporters and cameras.

"I'm extremely disappointed that the jury did not see the facts in this case," he said.

"I will appeal this, and I remain confident in the man that I am and what I stand for and the family that I have."

MSG said it will appeal, also denying wrongdoing in a case widely viewed as a public relations disaster for a franchise struggling to regain credibility.

The team hasn't won a playoff game since Thomas was signed as president in December 2003 and has wasted millions this decade on a series of free-agent busts.

The verdict also amounts to another blemish on the resume of Thomas, a two-time NBA champion whose post-playing career has been marked by one failure after another.

NBA spokesman Tim Frank said the league's policies "do not encompass civil litigation."

Jurors, who needed roughly two days to decide on the allegations but only about an hour to determine damages, declined to talk about the verdict or how they came to their decision.

In a lawsuit filed last

January, the 44-year-old Browne Sanders sought \$10 million in punitive damages, but the jury was free to deviate from that figure.

The verdict also means the judge will determine and award compensatory damages in the coming weeks.

The harassment verdict was expected after the jury sent a note to the judge Monday indicating it believed Thomas, the Garden and Dolan sexually harassed Browne Sanders, a married mother of three and former

vice president for marketing.

Browne Sanders is currently an associate athletic director and senior woman administrator at the University of Buffalo.

"All of us in the Division of Athletics are thrilled to know that Anucha has been vindicated and that both her and her family have wrapped up this very difficult ordeal," the university said in a statement.

"We look forward to seeing her soon and, most of all, are elated that she can move

on with her life and career."

The jurors had heard Browne Sanders testify that Thomas, after arriving as new team president, routinely addressed her as "bitch" and "ho" in outbursts over marketing commitments.

He later did an abrupt about-face, declaring his love and suggesting an "off-site" liaison, she said.

Thomas, while admitting to using foul language around the plaintiff, insisted he never directed it toward

her. Degrading a woman in the workplace "is never okay," said Thomas, a married father of two. "It is never appropriate."

Dolan and a string of other executives also took the witness stand to deny they tolerated or witnessed sexual harassment.

They testified Browne Sanders was fired because she was incompetent on budget matters, and because she later sought to undermine an

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STORM WEATHERED
Kelly Pavlik, left, of Youngstown, Ohio, and Jermain Taylor of Little Rock, Ark., battled for the WBC and WBO world middleweight championships at the Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, N.J., on Saturday. In an epic fight, Pavlik survived a second-round knockdown and struck back with fury five rounds later to stop Taylor at two minutes, 47 seconds of the seventh round. Both fighters did damage with thunderous right hands in the action-packed bout. Pavlik weathered the storm, Taylor could not. Trailing on all three judges' scorecards, Pavlik knocked Taylor with uppercuts and headshots to capture the WBC and WBO middleweight titles. Pavlik fought in front of a partisan crowd of 10,127 at Boardwalk Hall.

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