

Lawsuits mounting over so-called Fight of the Century

By **Jason Meisner**
Chicago Tribune

MAY 14, 2015, 3:23 PM

Nearly two weeks after the so-called Fight of the Century between Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao fizzled in Las Vegas, legal haymakers in the form of class-action lawsuits are being thrown by Chicago-area fans who say they were cheated by the failure to disclose Pacquiao's bum shoulder.

A suit filed Wednesday in U.S. District Court in Chicago claims promoters and trainers involved in the May 2 bout — which was billed as the most expensive pay-per-view event in history — intentionally hid the fact that Pacquiao had torn his right rotator cuff during training in March and was forced to fight Mayweather virtually "one-handed."

Mayweather won by a lopsided unanimous decision, and the boxers took home a combined \$350 million, making it the richest purse in the sport's history.

The lawsuit names as plaintiffs two Chicago-area men who say they plunked down \$100 to watch the fight on pay-per-view TV and another man who claims he lost money in Las Vegas wagering on Pacquiao to win.

The suit seeks class-action status for anyone across the country who either paid to watch the bout or legally bet on Pacquiao.

The filing was at least the 11th such lawsuit across the country claiming a conspiracy existed between promoters with Top Rank Inc. and members of Pacquiao's camp to hide the left-hander's injury and avoid derailing a huge payday.

A suit containing nearly identical allegations was filed last week at the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse, records show. Lawyers for the three plaintiffs in that case have filed a motion seeking to have it removed to California, where there are two other pending class-action suits involving the fight.

The cases filed in Chicago both cite a questionnaire filled out by Pacquiao's trainer before the fight and signed by the 36-year-old fighter that marks "No" to the question, "Have you had any injury to your shoulders, elbows, or hands that needed evaluation or treatment?"

The suit filed Wednesday also cites an alleged Facebook post by Pacquiao's sparring partner, Dashon Johnson, who revealed that Pacquiao had been hurt in camp days before the contract to fight Mayweather had officially been signed.

"(Pacquiao) got hurt during this camp with his right shoulder and it was messed up pretty bad!" Johnson wrote, according to the lawsuit. "So bad his sparring partners including myself were asked to go home a few weeks out before the actual fight."

Despite his injury, Pacquiao and his handlers continued to insist he felt great before the fight, even telling reporters in a conference call he had a "great training camp" and was "ready to go," the lawsuit alleges.

Attorney Thomas Zimmerman, who represents the plaintiffs in the latest case, told the Tribune on Thursday that the allegations go beyond those of disgruntled sports fans who weren't happy with the outcome of a match.

"They made fraudulent misrepresentations to induce people to spend money they otherwise would never have spent," Zimmerman said. "Who would have bet on Pacquiao if they knew he was injured?"

jmeisner@tribpub.com

Twitter @jmetr22b

Copyright © 2015, Chicago Tribune

