

Saturday, June 26, 2021
Updated: June 27, 10:46 PM ET

Manny Pacquiao sued; injunction to stop Errol Spence Jr. fight filed

By Marc Raimondi

The management firm that represents Conor McGregor is suing boxing legend Manny Pacquiao.

Paradigm Sports Management filed a multimillion-dollar lawsuit Friday against Pacquiao in Orange County civil court, claiming breach of contract, among other assertions, per the complaint obtained Saturday by ESPN.

Paradigm attorney Judd Burstein told ESPN that his client is seeking damages from Pacquiao that could reach into the eight figures. Paradigm claims it had exclusive rights to negotiate Pacquiao's next two fights and his upcoming bout with Errol Spence Jr. was brokered behind the firm's back.

In addition, Paradigm says it paid Pacquiao a \$3.3 million contractual advance that he has refused to return.

Paradigm is also seeking an injunction to keep Pacquiao from fighting Spence, the undefeated WBC and IBF welterweight champion, on Aug. 21 in Las Vegas. McGregor, the UFC superstar, is the most high-profile client of Paradigm, which also represents MMA stars such as Israel Adesanya and Cris Cyborg.

"Paradigm Sports' lawsuit against me has no merit. I have an absolute right under the agreement with Paradigm to engage in the upcoming bout with Errol Spence," Pacquiao said in a statement on Sunday. "If this frivolous lawsuit continues, I will be proven correct in court."

Pacquiao made news last year when it was announced that he had signed with Paradigm as its first major boxer. Per the complaint, Pacquiao signed an agreement on Feb. 8, 2020, for Paradigm and firm founder Audie Attar to be the boxer's exclusive representation worldwide with the promise that management company would get 10% of Pacquiao's fight purses and 20% of marketing, commercial and media contracts.

Paradigm claims that Pacquiao associates undermined the exclusive partnership, working on boxing deals outside of Paradigm's purview beginning almost immediately after the contract was signed -- and Pacquiao never publicly denounced the behavior. The complaint also claims that Pacquiao was negotiating on his own behalf behind Paradigm's back with a Middle Eastern prince.

Despite all that, Paradigm says it was able to negotiate a \$25 million fight purse for Pacquiao for a bout with Mikey Garcia that would have taken place May 15, 2021, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Pacquiao was to receive a \$5 million purse advance. That deal fell apart after Pacquiao attempted to make that \$5 million advance a guarantee, even if he did not compete, per the complaint.

There were also talks about McGregor being the first of Pacquiao's two final fights, though that idea was pushed back because of a McGregor injury and his loss to Dustin Poirier in January, Burstein wrote in the complaint.

Pacquiao announced in May that he would be fighting Spence, a deal that Paradigm claims it was not involved in.

"Pacquiao knew full well that Paradigm had exclusive rights to schedule his next two immediate fights," Burstein wrote in the complaint. "Nevertheless, in bad faith and material breach of the parties' contracts, Pacquiao, upon information and belief, had surreptitiously entered into a contract to fight Spence."

Pacquiao's attorney, Dale Kinsella, issued a statement Saturday night, calling Paradigm's lawsuit "a frivolous effort to interfere with Manny Pacquiao's upcoming mega fight" and saying "it can and will fail for numerous reasons."

"Had Manny Pacquiao known that Paradigm Sports appears to have had no intention of fulfilling its contractual obligations, he never would have entered into any relationship with them," Kinsella said in the statement. "Should this matter actually proceed beyond Friday's filing in a court of law, Mr. Pacquiao will vigorously defend this action, assert his own claims against Paradigm Sports, and seek to recover his attorney's fees as well."

The complaint stated that as a result of the failed Pacquiao negotiations, Garcia, who was Paradigm's only other boxing client, terminated his management agreement with the firm.

"Paradigm is a major company, but they were just getting into boxing," Burstein told ESPN. "This is their first foray into boxing and to lose it under those circumstances is a big deal. It has very significant consequences."

Burstein said there was an arbitration clause in Pacquiao's contract with Paradigm, but Pacquiao's lawyers told him they didn't think the boxer was bound by it, which is why Burstein filed the lawsuit. Paradigm is also claiming a breach of the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing, unjust enrichment and declaratory relief.

"It's just extraordinary to me that someone can receive \$3.3 million from my client and then forget about the reason why that money was given to him," Burstein said. ... "We're [seeking] in the significant millions of dollars. Certainly high sevens or eights, to be sure."

The Athletic was first to report the lawsuit.
