

SPORTS

Family of Prichard Colon files \$50 million lawsuit over fight that left boxer in coma

 By Gene Wang

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Prichard Colon, shown during his Oct. 17, 2015 fight against Terrel Williams. (Patrick Smith/Getty Images)

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The attorney for the parents of boxer Prichard Colon filed a lawsuit Wednesday in D.C. Superior Court seeking damages in excess of \$50 million stemming from a bout in Fairfax two years ago that [left the Puerto Rican super welterweight in a coma](#).

The complaint cites Richard Ashby, the ringside physician for the fight on Oct. 17, 2015, at EagleBank Arena, as negligent for “failing to take any of the required steps” after Colon repeatedly indicated he was experiencing head pain as the result of blows from his opponent, Terrel Williams.

Also named in the suit are Headbanger’s Promotions and DiBella Entertainment, co-promoters for the Premier Boxing Champions card that was televised on NBC.

“Prichard, a promising young professional boxer, lies in a vegetative state at his mother’s home with no prospect of ever regaining his faculties because of injuries he suffered during a boxing event,” the suit reads. “This injury could have — and should have — been avoided if the ringside physician had complied with the applicable standard of care in treating Prichard during the event.

“The injury also could have been avoided had the event promoters ensured that a qualified ringside physician was on-hand to treat Prichard’s injuries and if they had implemented a proper brain injury protocol.”

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Early in Round 7 of the undercard fight preceding the main event between Lamont Peterson and Felix Diaz , Colon fell to his knees clutching the back of his head with his right glove after absorbing a series of punches. Blows to the back of the head are known as “rabbit punches,” an illegal tactic in boxing. Colon then dropped to all fours, reaching both of his gloves behind his head.

Williams walked away from Colon and shook his head with an incredulous expression. Standing in a neutral corner, Williams tapped his gloves and appeared to be telling Colon, “Let’s go.” Colon stumbled to his feet, holding his left glove on the back of his head as he retreated to a neutral corner.

At that point, Ashby examined Colon and deemed him fit to continue. Referee Joe Cooper, meanwhile, deducted a point from Williams for an illegal punch.

The fight ended in Colon’s disqualification before the 10th round because of apparent confusion on the part of his corner. Thinking the bout was over, Colon’s team started to remove his gloves after Round 9 before realizing there was another round to go. His corner attempted to get Colon’s gloves back on, but too much time had elapsed, and Cooper signaled for a disqualification.

Upon arriving in his dressing room, Colon began complaining of dizziness and vomited. Colon eventually passed out, and Ashby examined him. EMTs transported Colon to Fairfax Inova Hospital where he underwent emergency surgery for bleeding on the left side of his brain.

Colon has not regained consciousness and remains under the care of his parents, Richard and Nieves Colon, at his mother’s home in Winter Park, Fla.

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“Whether you ask an ER doc, or whether you ask a ringside physician, the hallmark of a brain bleed is headache and dizziness, and so Dr. Ashby at that point, he had to stop the fight,” Ari Casper, the attorney representing the Colon family, said in a telephone interview from his Baltimore law office. “He had to tell Prichard, ‘Whether you want to keep going or not, my job here is to protect you. You’re my patient, and this fight’s over, and I’ve got to get you to the hospital, and we have to rule out a bleed.’

“And had he done that, they would have gotten Prichard to the hospital in a timely manner. They could have evacuated the bleed, and we have an entirely different outcome.”

In the days following the fight, the Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation launched an investigation that determined months later that there were [no violations attributable to Ashby or the promoters](#). The DPOR oversees licensing and regulation for a wide range of businesses and events in Virginia, including boxing, mixed martial arts and wrestling.


David Holland, state boxing commissioner for Virginia, also investigated the proceedings and indicated at the time he felt all arena personnel, including officials and medical staff, performed according to regulation and responded as quickly as possible.

“Colon was allowed to continue boxing as he did not have impaired vision, severe lacerations, apparent broken bones, or any other obvious physical injury,” the DPOR report reads, “and Colon was coherent, responsive, and able to stand on his own after taking some additional rest time.”

Messages left seeking comment from Ashby, Headbanger’s Promotions and Lou DiBella, chief executive of DiBella Entertainment, were not immediately returned. According to people familiar with the proceedings who requested anonymity because litigation is pending, promoters are not responsible for selecting ringside physicians and thus cannot be held liable.

The assignment of choosing a ringside physician as well as fight referees falls to the boxing commission, or in this case, the Virginia DPOR.

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 By Gene Wang

Gene Wang is a sports reporter covering multiple beats, including Virginia and Virginia Tech football and basketball, national college football and basketball, the Wizards, boxing and golf. He has been with The Washington Post sports department since 1990, and has also written about other Washington teams and fantasy football. [Twitter](#)

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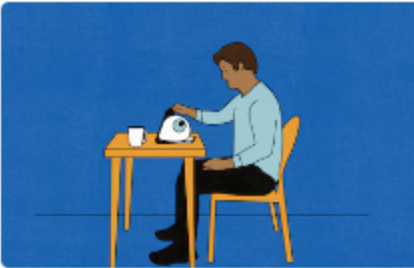
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