

= Knicks ? Nuggets brawl =

The Knicks ? Nuggets brawl was an on @-@ court altercation at a National Basketball Association (NBA) game between the New York Knicks and Denver Nuggets at Madison Square Garden in New York City , New York , U.S. on December 16 , 2006 . This altercation was the most penalized on @-@ court fight in the NBA since the Pacers ? Pistons brawl two years before .

The fight began with a flagrant foul by Knicks guard Mardy Collins on Nuggets guard J. R. Smith in the closing seconds of the game . Several players joined in the confrontation , and began to make physical contact . The fight briefly spilled into the stands , and also stretched to the other end of the court . All ten players on the floor at the time were ejected after the altercation was finished . When suspensions were announced , seven players were suspended without pay for a combined total of 47 games .

Although they were not penalized , Nuggets coach George Karl and Knicks coach Isiah Thomas were both scrutinized for their part in the brawl . Carmelo Anthony was also criticized for harming his image as a star , and several writers said the league had penalized the players excessively because it wanted to keep its image free from violence .

= = Game recap = =

Entering the game , the New York Knicks had a record of 9 ? 17 while the Denver Nuggets sported a 13 ? 9 record . Despite trailing the entire game , the Knicks came as close as 2 points in the first half but the Nuggets regrouped and closed the half with a 13 @-@ point advantage and continued to lead in the second half by as much as 26 points in the third quarter . The Knicks briefly came within 10 points with ten minutes left in the game , but the Nuggets went on a 12 ? 2 run and were never threatened again . Carmelo Anthony scored 24 points to lead the Nuggets , and Marcus Camby added 24 points and 9 rebounds ; Stephon Marbury scored a season @-@ high 31 points for the Knicks .

= = = Altercation = = =

The incident occurred with 1 : 15 remaining in the Knicks ' home game at Madison Square Garden , where the Nuggets were leading 119 ? 100 . The Knicks ' Mardy Collins fouled the Nuggets ' J. R. Smith on a fast break by slapping his arms around Smith 's neck , knocking him to the ground . As Smith stood up to confront Collins , Nate Robinson pulled Smith away , and then began pushing and shouting at him . David Lee tried to hold Smith back , but Smith broke free and charged into Robinson , causing both players to fall into the photographers and front row courtside seats , before they were quickly separated by teammates .

As the fighting was seemingly coming to an end , Carmelo Anthony confronted Collins and punched him in the face , knocking him to the ground . Jared Jeffries immediately tried to attack Anthony but tripped over Marcus Camby , before being restrained by coaches and teammates , while Anthony backed up towards the Nuggets ' bench . Collins also ran down the court to get at Anthony but was blocked by Nenê and Smith . All ten players on the court at the time of the incident were ejected by the officiating crew that consisted of Dick Bavetta , Violet Palmer , and Robbie Robinson .

= = Reactions = =

= = = Suspensions = = =

NBA commissioner David Stern reacted with strict penalties for the players involved , stating , " It is our obligation to take the strongest possible steps to avoid such failures in the future . " Seven players were suspended for a total of 47 games , and the players lost in excess of \$ 1 @. @ 2 million in salary . Each team was also fined \$ 500 @, @ 000 .

Because Anthony 's suspension was longer than 12 games , he was eligible to appeal to an arbitrator ; however , Anthony eventually announced he would not attempt one , saying he did not " want to be a further distraction " .

= = = Public reaction = = =

Several sportswriters said the brawl was not as violent as the Pacers ? Pistons brawl two years before , and 81 % of respondents in a SportsNation poll said the biggest difference between the two brawls was that it " didn 't involve players going into the stands and fighting fans " . However , Michael Ventre said that the Knicks and Nuggets brawl was worse because " it was touched off by the actions of players , and it escalated because of them . " Several writers said that the penalties were more severe because of the Pacers ? Pistons brawl , because the league was on a " very serious image @-@ cleanup campaign . "

Steve Francis claimed that the media reaction to the fight and the suspensions itself were " racially motivated . " He argued that Major League Baseball and the National Hockey League had " incidents that are way worse than basketball , " but did not face the scrutiny that the NBA received " because there are more black players in the NBA . " This was echoed by several writers , and sportswriter @-@ television personality Michael Wilbon said that " NBA players have endured more scrutiny , pertaining to image , than any other professional athletes in America . " Martin Luther King III called for a meeting to end the violence in the NBA , stating , " Individuals who play a game should be able to conduct themselves appropriately . " However , the NBA said through a spokesman that they " don 't think that meeting is necessary . "

= = = Coaches ' role in the brawl = = =

Minutes before the brawl started , Knicks coach Isiah Thomas asked Carmelo Anthony not to go into the painted area around the basket , despite the fact that they were not members of the same team . Thomas later said that because Denver head coach George Karl kept his team 's starting players on the court for the closing minutes of the game , which Thomas thought showed a lack of sportsmanship , his orders to Anthony were to " show some class . " However , Karl responded by saying the brawl " was directed by Isiah " .

Thomas was not penalized after the brawl , as an NBA investigation ruled that they did not have " adequate evidence upon which to make a determination , " but several writers criticized the NBA for not including Thomas in the suspensions . ESPN analyst Marc Stein called Thomas ' explanations of his comments " laughable , " and commentator Greg Anthony , a former Knicks player , said he " never had a coach say that to an opponent . " It was also suggested that Thomas was attempting to resurrect the physical tactics of his former team , the " Bad Boy " Pistons .

In response to Thomas saying that keeping the Nuggets starters on the floor in the final minutes of the game was unsportsmanlike , Karl said that he " never thought about running up the score , " and only wanted to " get a big win on the road . " However , several sportswriters criticized his decision , and some said that he should also have been penalized . It was also suggested that Karl was trying to humiliate Thomas due to the perception that Thomas had mistreated Larry Brown , a friend of Karl 's . Karl was also blamed for putting his players in a position to start a fight .

= = = Carmelo Anthony = = =

The day following the brawl , Anthony issued a statement and apology to his family , the league , and fans . He also specifically apologized to Mardy Collins , whom he directly struck during the incident . At the time of the brawl , Anthony was the league 's leading scorer ; his suspension was also the longest of the players suspended , and the sixth @-@ longest in NBA history . According to former NBA player Steve Kerr , Anthony had " tarnished " his image , and Ric Bucher said that Anthony had " torched his own career " . Sports Illustrated writer Marty Burns said that Anthony faced becoming known by sports fans across America as the player who punched Collins in the face

and then ran away . An example of the backlash was Northwest Airlines pulling Anthony from its in @-@ flight magazine cover , as it said it did not want " to condone the behavior of Anthony " .

= = Events after the brawl = =

A day after Anthony was suspended , Denver acquired Allen Iverson , who was then second in the league in scoring behind Anthony . After Anthony and Smith returned from their suspensions , the trio led the Nuggets to 45 wins and the sixth seed in the Western Conference for the playoffs . However , they were eliminated in the first round by the San Antonio Spurs . The Knicks finished 33 ? 49 , 12th in the Eastern Conference , and did not make the playoffs .

The two teams faced each other for the first time since the altercation on November 17 , 2007 , which the Nuggets won 115 ? 83 . Opposing players Renaldo Balkman and Linas Kleiza began arguing with each other after Balkman was called for a hard foul on Kleiza , but the incident was defused after Balkman was given a technical foul . Iverson , Anthony , and Marcus Camby were all removed early in the fourth quarter . Balkman and Kleiza later became teammates after Balkman was traded to the Nuggets in the 2008 off @-@ season .

As of the 2010 ? 11 season , of the seven suspended players , three were still with their respective teams . Mardy Collins was traded to the Los Angeles Clippers in 2008 . Jerome James was traded to the Chicago Bulls a year later , but never played for the Bulls as he suffered a torn Achilles tendon . Jeffries and Robinson were traded at the 2010 trade deadline to the Houston Rockets and Boston Celtics , respectively . Robinson then signed a multi @-@ year deal with the Denver Nuggets on July 26 , 2013 . Carmelo Anthony was traded to the Knicks before the 2011 trade deadline . Meanwhile , Jeffries ' contract was bought out by the Rockets and he rejoined the Knicks . In addition , J.R. Smith was signed by the Knicks in February of the 2012 season , which will make him the second former Nugget involved in the brawl to join the Knicks . Though not directly involved in the brawl , 2006 Nuggets C / PF Marcus Camby also joined the Knicks during the 2012 off @-@ season , making him the third 2006 Nugget to join the Knicks for the 2012 @-@ 2013 season . Also not directly involved in the brawl , PF Kenyon Martin joined the Knicks on February 21 , 2013 (initially on a 10 @-@ day contract) , making him the 4th member of the 2012 @-@ 2013 Knicks to have been on the ' 06 Nuggets team .