



Legendary hoop star says: Nike fouled me

By KATHIANNE BONIELLO

Last Updated: 11:56 AM, January 19, 2010

Posted: 4:40 AM, January 17, 2010

He never played a minute of high-school or college ball, but in the 1970s legendary Harlem hoopster Joe Hammond -- a.k.a. "The Destroyer" -- owned the blacktop at Rucker Playground, the uptown mecca for streetballers who often made it to the pros.

Hammond's cocky dunks, weaves and backboard magic earned him notoriety as New York City's greatest streetballer ever -- a rep that even rippled through the pro ranks when he scored an astounding 50 points against NBA Hall of Famer Julius "Dr. J" Erving in 1971.

Now, decades later, the 61-year-old, 6-foot-3 playground legend finds himself in a different court.

He's suing sneaker giants Nike and Foot Locker in Manhattan federal court for \$5 million for using his name on a T-shirt without his permission.

The shirt reads: "Joe The Destroyer Hammon" -- his last name misspelled -- with a picture of a dilapidated basketball hoop.

"They put a shirt of mine in Foot Locker with no contract," he grumbled outside his Harlem home last week.

Nike declined to comment.

Hammond -- who once turned down a contract with the Los Angeles Lakers because he was making more money dealing drugs -- did a 12-year stint in prison on drug charges.