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DiMaggio Company Sues Over Use Of Baseball Great's Name On Ring

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) -- The company owned by Joe DiMaggio's heirs sued a Texas-based ring company Wednesday, claiming it made a Joe DiMaggio commemorative ring without getting permission to use the baseball legend's name.

Balfour Ring Co. designed and produced a ring that claimed to be an officially licensed Joe DiMaggio product and bore a facsimile of his signature, according to Jon Rosenthal, attorney for DiMaggio LLC. The ring was advertised for sale on e-Bay in January for \$499, Rosenthal said.

"They have taken something of value, they have represented that its something that is an officially licensed product when in fact its not," Rosenthal said. "They are using that as a vehicle to dupe the buying public."

The suit, filed in Florida Circuit Court against Balfour's parent company, Commemorative Brands, seeks unspecified damages.

Balfour Rings had a license from an individual and company that said it was the sole licenser of Joe DiMaggio's name, said Larry Waks, attorney for Commemorative Brands.

Once company officials received notice from DiMaggio LLC and realized there was controversy, they stopped all production, distribution and marketing, Waks said.

"Like any responsible company would in it's position, it essentially froze the project," Waks said.

Waks said they have repeatedly asked DiMaggio LLC officials for proof that their company is the only entity possessing the legal right to license DiMaggio's name, but has not received an answer.

The production has stymied DiMaggio LLC's plans to produce exclusive rings bearing the hall of famer's name and signature, said Morris Engelberg, a trustee shareholder of DiMaggio LLC.

"Now we can't do it because they put out rings first without our permission," Engelberg said. "We can't say it's the first." (AP)

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