The Knicks are in as sorry shape as any club in the NBA right now.

There are teams with more losses than the Knickerbockers, but no squad is in such a sorry state in such a town as New York, where the media knives are long, sharp and perpetually poised to plunge into the unprotected flesh of unpopular public figures.

The knives have been aimed at and inserted in Knicks coach and GM Isiah Thomas since the 2005-2006 season, when the squad he put together went 23-59. Isiah took over as coach in June 2006, and the team has slid futher into disarray. Most of the city's fans now howl for the coach's removal, because the team stinks, and for Thomas' involvement in a sex harassment suit brought on by a female executive, who stated that Thomas harassed her sexually. Thomas lost the sex harass suit, and the Knicks have been ordered to pay $11.6 million in damages to the plaintiff.

Thomas is staying put, for now, but the Knicks need help, both on the court, and in their fight for some positive PR. The team looked to bolster themselves on both fronts on Friday, when they brought Roy Jones aboard.

No, Jones won't suit up for the team in live action, but really, he couldn't be that much worse than some of the people they have coming off the bench now.

"It was a dream come true for me to get on the court and shoot around and do some drills with the Knicks," said Jones, who played a game in the minor league USBL and fought the same night, in 1996. "I was a little rusty but I wasn't going to say no to coach Isiah. What a thrill it was to be on the court with the Knicks to see up close and personal how good they really are."

Thomas was happy to be able to keep it light for a change.

"I don't think anybody wanted to challenge him for fear that he may punch him," said the coach, who perhaps fantasized about enlisting Jones to rough up some press persons who have been calling for his firing.

Guard Nate Robinson also appreciated the visit and the change of atmosphere. "Roy Jones is a boxing great and it was fun to have him practice with us," he said. "That shows a lot of love on his part to join us today. It provided us with some inspiration. He didn't have to come out here with us but that just goes to show what kind of guy he is. He may be one of the smaller guys out here today, but I'll bet he could beat up all of us."

The 38-year-old Jones, counting down to his Jan. 19 tussle with soon-to-be 35-year-old Tito Trinidad in NY, left the team with some words of wisdom and inspiration.

"It was inspiring for me too," Jones (51-4-2) said. "I've had my ups and downs over the last

three years so I came out here today to let coach Thomas and the Knicks know they just need to hang in there, do the best they can, and their time will come. I know it will."

"Tito and his people think it's going to hurt me to have to go all the way down to 170 pounds—and it is a smart move on their part—but it's nothing I haven't been through before. I've had more than enough time to get down to weight so I'm not going to have to kill myself getting there.

"The big question is can Tito bring his punch and take my punches at 170 pounds. Tito must go in fo'. That's what everybody's waiting to see on January 19.