

# If King has his way, Lewis will be dethroned in court

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With the World Boxing Association giving Lennox Lewis the go-ahead to defend his undisputed heavyweight title against Michael Grant next month, you would think the fight could go off without a hitch.

Then again, this is boxing — and nothing is a certainty in this sport, especially when Don King is involved.

In Manhattan Federal Court yesterday, lawyers for Lewis opened their lawsuit against King, arguing that the British boxer should be able to keep his WBA belt if he fights Grant as scheduled at the Garden on April 29.

King maintains that Lewis signed a contract last year mandating that he fight the WBA's top-ranked contender, who at the time was Henry Akinwande.

And even though the WBA earlier this month gave Lewis a dispensation to fight Grant — as long as he agrees to fight its contender within 180 days after that bout — King says his legal contract supersedes any WBA ruling.

If the judge rules in King's favor, Lewis likely would have to forfeit his WBA title, and someone named John Ruiz would fight ex-champ Evander Holyfield for the vacant belt.

Holyfield, sitting across the courtroom from King, said he was there to support his promoter.

"It's clear that the winner of my fight was supposed to fight a contender," Holyfield said outside the courtroom, adding that Lewis apparently thinks he's "bigger than boxing, and that's just wrong."

Holyfield said the "honor of the game" was at stake, noting that he once had to fight Vaughn Bean to hold on to his title.

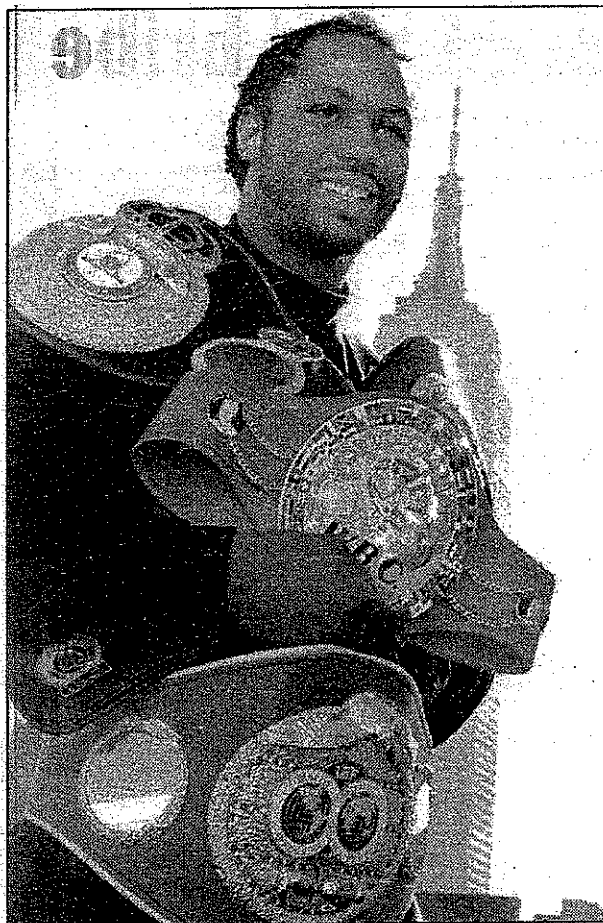
"This is what you have to do to be the undisputed champion," Holyfield said.

Asked if he thought Lewis — who beat Holyfield in their last fight after the first one was ruled a draw even though Lewis appeared to be the winner — was running away from a rematch with him, Holyfield said: "Could be, but the big thing is the rules are the rules."

Lewis' lawyer, Scott Gelfand, argued that the WBA ruling trumps his client's contract with King.

He also said the WBA has "ranked and reranked its heavyweight contenders in an arbitrary and capricious fashion."

Lewis is expected to take the witness stand today to tell his side of the story.



AP

**FIGHTING FOR IT** A court decision could take away heavyweight champ Lennox Lewis' WBA title.