



## BOXING

# King is no jester in court

## Sez Lewis reneged on deal to fight WBA No. 1

By HELEN PETERSON  
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Don King yesterday accused heavyweight champ Lennox Lewis of "reneging and welching" on a signed deal — arguing that the Brit should relinquish one of his three belts if he fights Michael Grant next month.

King commanded center stage at Manhattan Federal Court yesterday, suggesting from the witness stand that heavyweight champs have a duty to be honorable.

Saying men "just don't act dishonorably" for no reason, the promoter said Lewis should be "someone that people look up to and emulate and imitate."

His treatise on honor came on the second day of a trial pitting Lewis — who won the undisputed heavyweight title last year — against King in a contract dispute.

Lewis signed a contract with King calling for the winner of the Evander Holyfield-Lewis rematch last November to follow up with a bout against the World Boxing Association's top contender.

The WBA recently agreed to give Lewis a pass to fight Grant at the Garden next month, as long as his next bout is against the WBA's top contender.

But King says a contract is a contract, and testified in court that Lewis' handlers are using "chicanery and subterfuge" to back out.

Saying he was "speculating on expert knowledge of 30 years," King blamed Lewis' managers and lawyers for the

fighter's decision not to take on the WBA contender.

"I'd bet my life on it," King said, that Lewis was encouraged by his lawyers and others in his camp to fight Grant.

King's testimony is expected to continue this morning when the trial resumes before Manhattan Federal Judge Lewis Kaplan.

Kaplan hinted that both sides may have deliberately left the contract language vague, with the intent to duke it out in court if necessary.

He told the lawyers to consider the legal ramifications of that possibility before summing up their cases today.

If Kaplan rules against him, Lewis would have to relinquish the WBA belt.

"All I know is that they agreed to fight or vacate and they are reneging on that," King said outside court. "They brought the suit."

Echoing Holyfield's comments from a day earlier, King said: "They didn't honor their contract. They didn't honor their word. This is the heavyweight champion. The heavyweight champion is supposed to be honorable."

Asked if Lewis' camp is trying to cut him out of his fights, King fired back: "That's a given. Trying desperately."

Lewis' lawyer, Scott Gelfand, surprised the court when he said he had decided not to call the champ as a witness.

Gelfand said Lewis is training in Pennsylvania, and left open the possibility that he could be called as a rebuttal witness.