

## 2005 Mission Statement for Team Lacy: Clean House

Written by Jake Donovan  
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Regardless of your thoughts concerning how good or how great super middleweight champion Jeff "Left Hook" Lacy may be, he deserves credit for accomplishing whatever goal he sets his mind to. When he was an amateur, he was determined to eventually represent his country in the Olympics one day. Mission accomplished in 2000. When he turned pro early in 2001, he and his handlers set out a four-year plan, where by the end of 2004 he would be world champion. October 2, 2004 – mission accomplished with ninety days to spare.

Simply put, Lacy – much like the rest of his team - is a man of his word. The word for 2005 is that he now looks to clean out the super middleweight division, starting with Rubin "Mr. Hollywood" Williams this Saturday night during Showtime's *Free Preview Weekend* in Las Vegas, Nevada (Saturday, March 5, 10:30PM ET/PT – West Coast feed delayed). Lacy remains focused for the second defense of his title which he won just five months ago, but can't help but think ahead about where a win will take him.

"Right now, my focus is on Rubin Williams," Lacy told reporters during a national conference call last week. "But my goal for the immediate future is to become undisputed champion. After Williams, I am looking at any of the other (super middleweight champions)."

It's only natural for Lacy to set his goals so high so early into his career. Even in winning a world title in just his seventeenth pro fight, Lacy was actually a supporting player to an incredible run by the rest of his team. His head trainer, Dan Birmingham, was a runaway choice for 2004's Trainer of the Year, and renowned publicist Fred Sternburg scooped up the Media Good Guy Award. Not to mention stablemate Ronald "Winky" Wright enjoying a career year in scoring a pair of decisions over Shane Mosley and parlaying it into a superfight and career high payday against Felix "Tito" Trinidad this coming May.

Success surrounded by more success is a winning formula for any team.

"No doubt that having a trainer like Dan - and a world class slickster like Winky - can only make me better. I mean, for a young cat like me, you can't ask for any more than to get to learn from one of the best in the game today. Now I'm in a position to be even more successful than last year."

Last year was a banner year for Lacy. What made the year stand out even more is that he far exceeded the entire U.S. Olympic Class of 2000. Only Jose Navarro has gone on to fight for a world title thus far (in the first week of the year, and he was blatantly robbed in Japan). Teammates Rocky Juarez and Jermain Taylor are now in position to contend for world titles. By the time they earn their shots, Lacy hopes to be at least one unification fight into his division-conquering plans, regardless of where he has to travel.

"I mean, I've already fought overseas, so it's not like I'm scared to jump on a plane and fight somewhere else. If I need to fight Joe Calzaghe in England, or anywhere else in Europe against

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the other champs, then so be it. And they should feel the same way about coming here and fighting me. So long as my team believes that the terms are fair, I have no problem fighting anywhere against anyone. Whatever it takes to unify these titles, I will take the necessary steps to get it done.”

The first step comes against Williams, with whom Lacy has a bit of history. The two squared off three times in the amateurs, with Jeff taking two out of three. What Jeff remembers about the fights is that he won two out of three.

“To be honest,” Lacy said about Williams, “I remember him in the amateurs, but I don’t remember the fights. All I remember was that I was a puncher and Rubin is a skilled boxer, and that they were probably close. But the two wins I have and the win he is supposed to have had over me do not even count as far as dealing with a pro staff. I am just going to go out and do what I do best – press the issue and look for something to open up.”

Many will contend that such a theory did not pan out too well in his last fight, a tougher-than-expected (amongst the “experts” anyway) twelve-round decision over battle-tested Omar Sheika. The bout was Lacy’s first title defense, coming a mere nine weeks after his title-winning effort against Syd Vanderpool, when he stopped the cagey veteran in eight rounds. Both wins took place in Las Vegas and on SHOWTIME. The cable network will be showcasing Lacy for the seventh time in his past nine bouts, for which Lacy every bit as thankful as for the team that has guided him to the top.

“I am very thankful that so many of my fights have been on Showtime. Television is such a key in a boxer’s career. I am a guy blessed with punching power who keeps fans on the edge of their seats,” said the champ. “But without Showtime I would not have gotten nearly the kind of great exposure that I have received in my career. And without exposure it is impossible for any young boxer to make a name for himself.”

Exposure has never been a problem for Lacy, whose schedule throughout his career has been rivaled by very few, especially at the championship level. In an era where champions are lucky to show up twice a year, Lacy is fighting in a title fight for the third time in five months, and his fourth fight overall in the past nine months. Perhaps the six-month layoff prior to this run gave him all the rest he needed, as he prefers the current pace he’s on right now.

“I love to stay in the public’s eye, and continue to work on my skill and learn as much as I can. Being that I’m a champion with only eighteen pro fights, a lot of the guys I enter the ring against have more pro fights and more experience than I do. To compensate, I try to stay of the injured list and remain active. I want to fight three or four times this year, and for that to be the normal pace.”

Such has been the norm ever since Lacy upgraded the competition level in 2003. He fought four times that year and three in 2004. He was scheduled to fight in March 2004 on the Showtime under card of the rematch between Diego Corrales and Joel Casamayor, but was scratched for precautionary measures when he experienced double vision during a sparring session. Making up for lost time, Jeff returned to the ring in June and promoter Gary Shaw has

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kept lining them up ever since.

Providing that he is successful against Williams this weekend, Lacy hopes that his promoter extraordinaire can start lining up the other world champions.

“Once I get by Rubin – who I’m not overlooking, but will make sure to get past – then I want the other title holders in the division. Whether they come here or I go there, so long as it’s all good and even,” Lacy said, “then I have no problem with the course taken to get to the top. All I want is to conquer a goal that I have for myself.”

That’s a promise he intends to keep with the rest of the world.