

WBC makes Toney mandatory in bizarre ruling

Written by JE Grant

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Do you want to know how much the WBC's heavyweight ratings are worth? Just take a gander at their latest stunt that pushes James Toney up to the next mandatory position.

Toney, who in the latest ratings listed on the WBC's website (Sept. 2005), is the number five contender, suddenly, without having lifted a finger, moved from that position to number one and mandatory as a challenger to newly crowned Hasim Rahman.

Consider that in the same ratings Sinan Samil Sam was number one and Oleg Maskaev was number two. Maskaev won a decision over Sam on November 12th, in what should have made him the next mandatory as it was billed an eliminator. (Of course we all realize that neither Sam nor Maskaev should have held such lofty ratings – but that's what the WBC listed).

Further consider, that number four-ranked Oliver McCall lost a decision to number eight-ranked Juan Carlos Gomez on October 15th in a bout that may have also been billed as some type of eliminator.

Finally consider that number-three ranked Wladimir Klitschko defeated the tough and undefeated and number seven-ranked Samuel Peter on September 24th.

Klitschko was, however, removed from consideration for a title shot.

“Wladimir Klitschko was taken out of consideration after the report that he will fight for the championship of a different organization,” the organization said in the news release announcing the Toney decision. Exactly which of the belt holders has contracted for a Klitschko fight was not mentioned (perhaps because there isn't one).

James Toney, a consensus top ten fighter, defeated Dominick Guinn on October 1st. Guinn is not ranked in the top 40 among heavyweights by the WBC.

Still, the WBC published the news release that set a requirement for a Toney title shot.

“The first challenger to confirm Hasim Rahman as the undisputed champion in the ring, after being appointed as the undisputed champion, shall be James Toney,” read the release. Of course if he has been named the champion why should a challenger “confirm” anything? Either he is the champion now or his is not.

Oddly, the same release also requires that the winner of a Rahman-Toney fight must face Maskaev immediately following.

“The second challenger ... is Oleg Maskaev,” according to the release, “with no intervening voluntary defense.”

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Scratch your head here with me. The number two Maskaev beats the number one Sam and James Toney, the number five, gets the first shot at Rahman.

Again, this is not to say that Maskaev, Sam, Gomez, McCall, Wladimir Klitschko, or perhaps anyone else is actually better than Toney – but the WBC seemed to think so – until today.

What changed their collective minds so abruptly? Will Maskaev allow the fight to go without resorting to court action where he may have the strongest case ever that so clearly points to a bogus method of selecting the mandatory contender?

What happens now with Gomez? It would seem his “eliminator” (if it really was one, because that is not quite clear) was effective in eliminating both him and McCall.

What title fight is Klitschko signed for that he would be pushed aside?

Bottom line, what happened that suddenly pushed Toney ahead of everyone else?

If any of our *Sweet Science* readers can understand the gobbledygook edict by the WBC, please send in your response.