If the heavyweight division was a dog, you'd slip a rope around its neck, take it into the woods, pat it gently on the head and shoot it.

It would be the humane thing to do. Old dogs who are just hanging on - limping, deaf and half-blind - shouldn't be allowed to suffer.

Still, it's sad when you remember how good Fido used to be in his prime, how he was the fastest dog in the woods, the best hunter in the county and the best tracker this side of Davy Crockett. But that time is passed.

Same with the heavyweight division. It used to be the best dog in the hunt. Now it's the runt of the litter.

When a guy like Andrew Golota - who hadn't landed a low blow in almost three years before landing a couple last week against Brian "Big Man" Nix - can make heavyweight headlines, you know the division is wobbling and about to take a ten count.

Golota's seventh-round TKO of Nix - a club fighter who somehow beat an old and fading Tim Witherspoon this past March - drew almost 2,000 fans to the fight mecca of Dover, Delaware.

It was Golota's first fight since he was pounded by Mike Tyson inside three rounds in October 2000. Of course, that fight was later changed to a no contest when Tyson tested positive for the demon drug, marijuana. Tyson is probably the only fighter in the world who smokes a little reefer before a fight and still turns nasty.

Golota's fight with Nix was reportedly attended by fans of mostly Polish descent who came out to welcome Golota back after the native of Warsaw apparently looked out across the heavyweight horizon and discovered it was barren.

The top of today's heavyweight division would have been at the bottom of the division 30 years ago.

Start with WBC heavyweight champ Lennox Lewis. A former legitimate heavyweight champion, Lewis continues to tease us by saying he might quit. Or, maybe he'll fight Vitali Klitschko again. But maybe not. Mike Tyson? Who cares. Yeah, maybe he'll retire.

"Lennox Lewis never fought the guys he was supposed to fight when he had all three belts," said former heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield. "Now he has only one belt and says he wants to retire. Well quit talking about it. If you are going to retire, then retire."

Thanks, Evander.

That moves us over to WBA heavyweight champ, Roy Jones Jr. You remember Roy. He used to be a middleweight champ and then he was a super-middleweight champ then he was a light-heavyweight champ and now he's a heavyweight champ who is apparently going to drop down again and fight a light-heavyweight champ: Antonio Tarver.

Jones is good enough to beat a lot of the top heavyweights. He's just not big enough to beat the best of the top heavyweights.

Next up is IBF champ Chris Byrd, who in a former life was one of the Radio City Rockettes. The guy has slicker moves than a Times Square pickpocket. He can't punch his way out of a knitting class, but he doesn't have to. You can't beat him if you can't catch him. He's the Willie Pep of the heavyweight division. But he isn't going to make anyone forget Rocky Marciano.

Finally, in the WBO, there is Cornelius Johannes Sanders, the champ from-out-of-nowhere who won the title with a stunning second-round TKO of Wladimir Klitschko in March. Before the fight with Klitschko it was "Corrie who? How do you spell that?"

Since winning the WBO title, Sanders has been mentioned as a possible opponent for Jones, but this is the heavyweight division where nothing is done without fanfare, name-calling, back-stabbing and deal breaking.

"The heavyweight division is at a standstill," said Holyfield, who sees through all the bull.

No wonder it's such an easy target.