



# WORLD BOXING ORGANIZATION

## WBO WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

In the Matter of the WBO Jr. Welterweight Division

**Parties:**

**Mr. Bob Arum**  
Promoter  
Top Rank, Inc.  
On behalf of Teofimo Lopez, Jr.

**Mr. Eddie Hearn**  
Promoter  
Matchroom Boxing  
On behalf of Jack Catterall

**Mr. Eric Gomez**  
Promoter  
Golden Boy Promotions  
On behalf of Arnold Barboza, Jr.

### **ISSUES PRESENTED**

The mandatory defense obligation of WBO Jr. Welterweight Champion Teofimo Lopez; the conditions governing the Interim Championship bout between Jack Catterall and Arnold Barboza, Jr.; the time frame for terminating the Interim Champion status to ensure recognition of a single world champion in the Jr. Welterweight Division; and the Committee's reserved right to issue further rulings deemed necessary, helpful, or convenient to fulfill the purposes, policies, and intent of the governing rules and regulations, including those rulings that best serve the interests of boxing and the WBO Jr. Welterweight Division.

### **STATEMENT OF FACTS**

On June 10, 2023, Teofimo Lopez, Jr. (18-1-0) defeated former undisputed and lineal Jr. Welterweight Champion Josh Taylor (19-0-0) via unanimous decision, becoming a two-division WBO World Champion. The bout was held at the MSG Theater in New York, New York, United States of America. Following this victory, the Committee unanimously approved conferring upon Lopez, Jr. the **WBO "Super Champion" status (not a title)**, which grants specific rights and privileges as outlined in Section 14 of the WBO Regulations of World Championship Contests.

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One of the privileges of a **WBO “Super Champion”** is the ability to fulfill a mandatory defense obligation within a period of no more than 18 months (1 year and 6 months) following either his last mandatory defense or title acquisition. Subsequently, Lopez, Jr. completed two consecutive successful voluntary title defenses via unanimous decision:

1. Against Jamaine Ortiz (17-1-1) on February 8, 2024, at the Michelob Ultra Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada.
2. Against Steve Claggett (38-7-2) on June 29, 2024, at the James L. Knight Center in Miami, Florida, USA.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, 1 year and 7 months have elapsed since Lopez, Jr., won the WBO Jr. Welterweight Championship, making his mandatory title defense obligation due. However, this Committee had not determined a definitive and legitimate Mandatory Challenger in the Jr. Welterweight division to initiate negotiations for fulfilling said obligation. Consequently, the Committee ordered an elimination championship bout between the top two available contenders in the Jr. Welterweight Division: #1 ranked Arnold Barboza, Jr. (31-0-0), and #2 ranked Jack Catterall (30-1-0). Both contenders presented compelling cases for mandatory challenger designation, leading the Committee to sanction the elimination contest to determine the definitive mandatory challenger for the WBO Jr. Welterweight Division.

On November 26, 2024, the Committee ordered negotiations for the WBO Jr. Welterweight Elimination Championship Contest between Catterall and Barboza. The teams reached an agreement, scheduling the bout for February 15, 2024, in Manchester, Lancashire, United Kingdom. Meanwhile, official boxing reports indicated that Lopez, Jr., was in negotiations to face Subriel Matias between March and April 2025. However, after weeks of ongoing discussions, Lopez, Jr., and his promotional team, Top Rank, Inc., failed to finalize a deal, and the proposed Matias bout was abandoned. In light of the thereof, the Committee considered the following:

- (i) Lopez, Jr.’s status as WBO Jr. Welterweight Champion and his associated duties and obligations, including his mandatory title defense;
- (ii) his inactivity since his last title defense (7 months and counting);
- (iii) the uncertainty regarding his next bout;
- (iv) the ambiguity surrounding his professional career;
- (v) the potential legal dispute between Lopez, Jr., and Top Rank, Inc.;
- (vi) the activity within the Jr. Welterweight Division;
- (vii) the necessity of protecting the rights and interests of other contenders in the division; and
- (viii) the need for a ruling that serves the best interests of boxing, particularly in the Jr. Welterweight Division.

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Accordingly, on January 10, 2025, the WBO, through its President Gustavo Olivieri, Esq., announced its intention to recommend that the Championship Committee sanction the Catterall/Barboza contest for the Interim Championship. This recommendation is subject to specific provisions for terminating the interim champion status to ensure the recognition of a single world champion in the Jr. Welterweight Division. As of now, neither Team Lopez nor his promotional outlet, Top Rank, Inc., has informed the WBO of Lopez, Jr.'s next bout, opponent, or preliminary date for his return to the ring.

Now, after reviewing the facts presented, the circumstances of this case, and the WBO Regulations of World Championship Contests—including their applicability and enforcement in this matter—and exercising the authority granted by these rules, this Committee must proactively take affirmative actions. Therefore, are ruling is the following:

## APPLICABLE PROVISIONS

All parties agree that they are bound by the WBO Regulations of World Championship Contests. Section 35(f) provides in relevant: “These Regulations apply to all WBO Participants. The term WBO Participant includes, but not limited to, WBO World Champions and WBO World Championship Contenders. All WBO Participants who participate in any WBO sanctioned activity do so on the express condition that such WBO Participant is bound by and subject to these WBO World Championship Rules and all WBO Rules and Regulations”. [Emphasis Added]. As such, this Committee has jurisdiction and the authority conferred by its rules to resolve the matter at issue accordingly.

The WBO World Championship Committee’s authority to consider the issue at hand is governed under Sections 5, 10, and 19 (a)(c)(1)(2), respectively of the WBO Rules and Regulations of World Championship Contests, which provide, in relevant as follows:

## SECTION 5. DEFENSE OF THE TITLE

(a) Each WBO World Champion except in the Heavyweight Division shall defend his title at intervals not greater than nine (9) months counting from the date of the acquisition thereof or from the last compulsory defense, as the case may be, in a twelve (12) round fight, against the Mandatory Challenger, as determined by the Championship Committee according to these Regulations, unless an exception is made pursuant to these Regulations. For reasons unique to the Heavyweight Division, the WBO World Champion in the Heavyweight Division shall defend his title at intervals not greater than twelve (12) months counting from the date of the acquisition thereof or from the last compulsory defense as the case may be in a twelve (12) round fight, against the Mandatory Challenger, as determined by the

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Championship Committee according to these Regulations, unless an exception is made pursuant to these Regulations.

(b) In the interim period, the World Champion may defend the title against any contender classified within the fifteen (15) best by the World Boxing Organization, always with the approval of the World Championships Committee.

(c) The WBO World Championship Committee may, in its discretion, vacate a Champion's title (including the Heavyweight Division) regardless of cause or fault if the Champion fails to defend his title within a nine (9) month period. This decision will be final unless appealed to the Grievance Committee within ten (10) days of Notification to the Champion as provided for in these Rules. A Champion so stripped of his Title shall be classified using the WBO rating criteria, and he shall be classified in his division or in such other weight division as the Classifications Committee for good cause determines, provided that he has complied with the WBO and ABC rating criteria.

(d) No WBO Champion may hold WBO titles in more than one Weight Division. If a WBO Champion wins a WBO Championship in a higher or lower division, the WBO Champion shall have Ten (10) Days to determine which Weight Division the WBO Champion will retain. The other Weight Division will be declared vacant.

(e) In any circumstance in which a Mandatory Defense does not occur within the designated time period, the World Championship Committee may order an Interim Championship between contenders determined by the World Championship Committee.

## SECTION 10. COMPULSORY DEFENSES

(a) Within the sixty (60) days prior to the date of the compulsory defense, no World Champion shall sign a Contract for the defense of his title, nor defend it against a boxer other than the Mandatory Challenger, unless authorized by the World Championship Committee.

(b) If a World Champion loses his title against a contender other than the Mandatory Challenger, the new World Champion shall defend his title in a bout, within a period not greater than one hundred eighty (180) days counting from the dated of the acquisition of the title, against the Mandatory Challenger in his category according to the current list of the Classifications Committee, and from then on, shall defend his title at intervals not greater than nine (9) months against the Mandatory Challenger, unless an exception is approved by the World Championship Committee.

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(c) The World Championships Committee shall inform each World Champion recognized as such by the Organization in his respective weight category of division, in writing, with at least sixty (60) days of previous notice, of the obligation to defend the title in a compulsory fight against the Mandatory Challenger. It is contemplated that the Champion and the Mandatory Challenger shall attempt in good faith to reach an agreement within the first thirty (30) days of the sixty (60) days mentioned herein. The President or the Championship Committee may increase or decrease the time in which the Champion and the Mandatory Challenger should reach an agreement, which period shall be not less than five (5) days. If the Champion and the Mandatory Challenger fail to reach agreement within such time as is determined by the President consistent with these regulations, the President may order a Purse Bid as hereinafter provided. Either the Champion or the Mandatory Challenger may end this negotiation period by written notice to the WBO at any time during the Thirty (30) day negotiation period. The WBO President shall have the discretion to reduce the negotiation period to not less than five (5) days. The WBO President may call the Purse Bid within ten (10) days of the end of the negotiation period.

## **SECTION 19. FAILURE OF THE CHAMPION TO COMPLY WITH THE TERMS OF A WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP CONTRACT OR THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RULES**

(a) If any WBO Participant, including WBO World and Regional Champion(s), fails to comply with his contractual obligation to fight in any WBO Championship Contest without justifiable cause, or is determined by a Host Commission, a licensing commission or otherwise has tested positive for an illegal or any performance-enhancing drug, or fails to inform the WBO of any medical condition, impairment or any other circumstance which jeopardizes his participation in a WBO World Championship contest, or if a WBO Participant or any of his team members misleads, attempts to mislead, or petitions a Local Boxing Commission to illegally or incorrectly license said WBO Participant, the Committee may recommend to the WBO President and to the Executive Committee that the fighter be stripped of the title and that the title be declared vacant, or take any action deem proper, equitable and just against the WBO Participant in accordance with these regulations.

### **b) Procedures - In General**

The WBO World Championship Committee shall have all powers and authority to request, examine, evaluate, and consider any and all relevant facts and supporting evidence from any WBO Participant pertaining to any allegation(s) of violation(s) of these prohibitions.



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## (1) Show Cause Notice

In the event the WBO World Championship Committee determines there is cause to believe there is the possibility of a violation of any of the prohibitions of these Championship Rules by a WBO Participant, it shall notify the WBO Participant through the methods set forth in these Regulations, that the WBO Participant must Show Cause why the enforcement of this provision, or as otherwise provided for in these Regulations, should not be imposed. The Show Cause Notice shall establish the potential violation that must be responded to and the evidence, documentation, and procedure established by the WBO World Championship Committee to respond to the Show Cause Notice. Failure to address and/or submit any required or supporting evidence by the WBO Participant within the time frame outlined in the Show Cause Notice will constitute a waiver of any right to contest the Show Cause Notice. Upon receipt of the WBO Participant's response to the Show Cause Notice, the WBO World Championship Committee shall determine whether there has been a violation of a prohibition contained in the WBO World Championship Regulations and issue a ruling on the consequences for such a determination of a violation(s). All Notifications of rulings shall have immediate effect upon issuance. Methods of verifiable notifications are as follows:

## (2) Vacant Title based on facts determined by the WBO World Championship Committee

In the event of a possible violation of any of the prohibitions of these Championship Rules by a WBO Participant subject to a governmental procedural process, such as a criminal proceeding, the WBO World Championship Committee may make its determination of the Show Cause process established by these Rules without regard to the verdict of the governmental process. The WBO World Championship Committee may recommend to the WBO President and Executive Committee, which shall make its determination of the Show Cause process and its ruling independent of any governmental procedure process that arises from or relates to the same nexus of operable facts.

## ANALYSIS

We begin our ratio decidendi referencing an excerpt of the WBO preamble<sup>1</sup>, which states in relevant "...A World Champion is an integral part of the sport of boxing, but he is not greater than the sport of boxing. A World Champion's sportsmanship shows his respect for the profession he has chosen, including the Champion himself, his opponent, the World Boxing Organization, and, most importantly, boxing fans worldwide. The World Boxing Organization's Regulations of World Championship Contests are intended to reconcile the interests of all necessary elements of World Championship Boxing in a manner that is in the best

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interests of the sport. The most important interests are those of the Championship contestants themselves and their worldwide fans...”

The issue before the Committee is straightforward: the WBO Jr. Welterweight Champion must fulfill his mandatory title defense obligation by facing the winner of the Interim Championship. By doing so, he satisfies his regulatory duty, consolidates the division, and ensures that only one WBO World Jr. Welterweight Champion holds the title. This requirement aligns with the fundamental principle that the WBO recognizes only one world champion per weight category, reinforcing the integrity and uniformity of the division.

## DECISION - WBO WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP COMMITTEE

Having carefully reviewed and appraised the facts and particularities stated herein, having reviewed the relevant provisions, and having examined our governing rules and regulations, this Committee resolves as follows:

1. The WBO Championship Committee hereby rules as follows:
  - a. Teofimo Lopez, Jr., must discharge his mandatory title defense obligation against the winner of Catterall/Barboza within 180 days after their bout scheduled for Saturday, February 15, 2024, to terminate the Interim Champion status and ensure a single world champion in the Jr. Welterweight division.
  - b. Failure to comply with the conditions outlined herein will result in triggering this Committee intervention for the enforcement of the WBO regulations of World Championship Contests.
  - c. The conditions herein are incorporated by reference in the official sanction letter for Catterall/Barboza bout with full force and effect.
  - d. All relevant parties herein acknowledge, understand, and accept the terms and conditions set forth herein.
  - e. The conditions outlined herein are final, definitive, and enforceable.
2. The Committee reserves its right to issue all further rulings and determinations necessary, helpful, and convenient to accomplish the purposes, policies, and intent of the WBO Rules and Regulations, including rendering those rulings that best serve the interests of boxing, the World Boxing Organization (WBO), and its Jr. Welterweight Division.

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This is a final decision of the WBO Championship Committee. The affected WBO participant may appeal such determination to the Complaint and Grievance Committee as per Rule 34, which as per Article 3(e) of the WBO Appeals Regulation must be submitted in writing to the WBO President within fourteen (14) days of this decision as its sole and exclusive remedy.

**Dated: January 28, 2025**  
**San Juan, Puerto Rico**

**WBO CHAMPIONSHIP COMMITTEE**  
By: Luis Batista Salas, Esq.

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Chairman/Championship Committee

Cc: Gustavo Olivieri, Esq./WBO President  
Carl Moretti/Top Rank  
Jeremy Koegel/Top Rank  
Greg Smith, Esq./Team Lopez  
Keith Connolly/Team Lopez  
Shaun Palmer/Matchroom Boxing  
Mike Boreao/Team Lopez  
Teofimo Lopez, Jr./WBO Champion  
Arnold Barboza, Jr./WBO Participant

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