



WBO WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

In the Matter of WBO Bantamweight Champion John Riel Casimero

Parties:

Steven Pacitti, Esq.
Attorney for John Riel Casimero

Mr. Egis Klimas
Manager for John Riel Casimero

ISSUE PRESENTED

Whether John Riel Casimero (“Casimero”) failed to comply with the terms and conditions set forth by the WBO World Championship Committee’s “*Resolutions*” as result of the British Boxing Board of Control prohibiting Casimero to participate in his WBO Mandatory Bantamweight Championship bout against Paul Butler (“Butler”) as scheduled on Friday, April 22, 2022, in Liverpool, United Kingdom. We respond in the affirmative and explain our reasoning below accordingly.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

On November 30, 2019, Casimero won the WBO Bantamweight Championship Title after defeating Zolani Tete via TKO in round six (6). This bout was held at the Utilita Arena in Birmingham, West Midlands, United Kingdom. Thereafter, WBO granted Casimero request for a voluntary title defense against Duke Micah on September 26, 2020, at the Mohegan Sun Casino in Uncasville, Connecticut, United States of America. Said bout resulted in a TKO victory for Casimero in round three (3). Subsequently, WBO granted Casimero’s request for another voluntary title defense, this time against Guillermo Rigondeux on August 14, 2021, which resulted in a win via split decision for Casimero. Said bout was conducted at the Dignity Health Sports Park in Carson, California, United States of America.

On September 22, 2021, this Committee ordered the commencement of negotiations for Casimero’s mandatory title defense against Butler, considering that such obligation was past due, and consequently, a negotiation letter was issued to the relevant parties. However, the parties were unable to reach an agreement in the allotted timeframe provided. Thus, a purse bid proceeding was ordered and conducted on October 7, 2021, at the World Boxing Organization main offices in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The only licensed bidder was “Probellum” who won the promotional rights to stage the Casimero/Butler mandatory championship bout on December 11, 2021, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Upon adjudicating the purse bid to “Probellum,” the WBO World Championship Committee set forth specific provisions, most notably: “(i) in the event the WBO Champion (Casimero) is injured or suffers an injury and depending on the type of injury and recovery period, or is unavailable to participate, fight or engage for any reason whatsoever, the WBO World Championship Committee may declare the WBO Bantamweight Championship Title “Vacant,” or order an interim championship bout”. *See, Casimero/Butler Purse Bid Minutes* Accordingly, this Committee granted sanction approval for Casimero/Butler to take place on December 11, 2021, at the Coca Cola Arena in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

On December 10, 2021, just a day prior to the official Casimero/Butler weigh in, the WBO confirmed receipt of email correspondence on behalf of “Probellum” advising that Casimero would not be allowed to weigh in and therefore participate in the scheduled bout due medical reasons.



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Consequently, WBO intervened, and issued a “Show Cause” notice letter to Casimero dated December 10, 2021, as to why the WBO should not declare the WBO Bantamweight Championship “Vacant.” In wake of Casimero’s unavailability to proceed with the scheduled bout, “Probellum” requested sanction approval for the Interim Bantamweight Championship between Butler and Joseph Agbeko. Nonetheless, Butler opted not to proceed with the interim bout and thus, the main event was canceled.

On December 12, 2021, Casimero submitted his response to the “Show Cause” notice letter and supported evidence, including medical documents pertaining to his condition. Accordingly, on December 23, 2021, this Committee issued “Resolution” addressing Casimero’s withdrawal of the Butler bout, his medical condition, and the prospective course of action regarding his mandatory title obligation. The aforementioned “Resolution” set forth specific terms and conditions under which Casimero must comply therewith, most notably: “(i) in the event that John Riel Casimero does not attend the official weigh-in for any reason whatsoever, the WBO Bantamweight Championship Title will be declared Vacant “Ipso Facto;” and (ii) in the event that John Riel Casimero is injured or suffers an injury, refuses to fight, or is unavailable to participate, fight, or engage for any reason whatsoever, the WBO Bantamweight Championship Title will be declared “Vacant,” and John Riel Casimero shall be rated in the WBO Bantamweight World Ratings per the ABC and WBO Rating Criteria, respectively”. Upon review of Casimero’s arguments and supportive evidence, this Committee ruled that it satisfied our threshold and declared that Casimero would retain his WBO Bantamweight Championship subject to the specific provisions stated therein.

Days following the issuance of this Committee’s “Resolution,” “Probellum” advised the WBO that it would reschedule the Casimero/Butler bout per the terms and provisions established in the purse bid proceeding held on October 7, 2021. On January 26, 2022, the WBO granted sanction approval for the Casimero/Butler mandatory title defense to be held in Liverpool, England, United Kingdom. The sanction letter specifically stressed that “(i) Casimero had not fulfilled a mandatory title defense since his title acquisition in November 2019¹; and (ii) sanction approval was conditioned upon Casimero’s full compliance with all the provisions outlined in the “Resolution” dated December 23, 2021”.

Conversely, on February 22, 2022, boxing news outletsⁱⁱ reported that Casimero faced “acts of lasciviousness” complaint from a minor in the Philippines. Accordingly, this Committee requested Casimero to “Show Cause” via notice letter as to why the WBO should not strip Casimero considering the nature of the alleged events based on the basic principles by which all WBO Champions must abide and adhere thereto. On March 4, 2022, Casimero submitted his response in compliance with our order and denied any sexual misconduct. Moreover, Casimero requested that he be permitted to proceed with the bout against Butler as rescheduled. Having the Championship Committee reviewed Casimero’s arguments, and having examined the submitted evidence, the Committee allowed Casimero to proceed with the bout against Butler on April 22, 2022.

¹ As of the writing of this ruling, Casimero has not fulfilled a mandatory title defense since acquiring the WBO World Bantamweight Championship Title on November 30, 2019. That is to say, two (2) years, five (5) months, and four (4) days.



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On March 31, 2022, the Committee again granted sanction approval for the rescheduled Casimero/Butler bout to be held at the Echo Arena in Liverpool, England, United Kingdom. As previously noted, the sanction letter explicitly outlined the terms and conditions set forth in the Committee’s “Resolution” dated December 23, 2021. Nonetheless, on April 19, 2022, the British Boxing Board of Control (BBBofC) issued an official notice addressed to Mr. Philip Jeffries of “Probellum” (promoter of the Casimero/Butler bout) which included, among other things, evidence regarding Casimero’s use of a sauna in proximity to his WBO World Bantamweight Championship Contest on April 22, 2022. Per the “BBBofC,” these actions contravened the board’s medical guidelines, and therefore, Casimero would be prohibited from participation on April 22, 2022. Furthermore, the board indicated that said participant had completed two (2) weight checks with BBBofC’s inspectors since his arrival in United Kingdom, and that these proceedings reflected an alarming reduction of Casimero’s weight. Per “BBBofC,” Casimero reduced his weight by ten (10) pounds in only three (3) days. In addition, the “BBBofC” was aware that this was not an isolated event. Casimero has attempted rapid weight loss in the wake of a bout on prior occasions. It was reported that he attended a hospital due to related effects of rapid weight loss. Based on the foregoing circumstances, the British Boxing Board of Control barred Casimero from his scheduled April 22, 2022, WBO mandatory title defense obligation against Butler.

Considering Casimero’s unavailability to proceed with the bout per the Board’s ruling, “Probellum” submitted a sanction request for the Interim Bantamweight Title between Butler and the first available contender, Jonas Sultan. Thereafter, pursuant to the Board’s ruling on Casimero, the WBO Championship Committee issued a “Show Cause” letter dated April 19, 2022, addressed to the fighter’s manager, Mr. Egis Klimas referencing (i) the British Boxing Board of Control’s prohibition on Casimero; (ii) the Committee’s conditions as per the December 23, 2021, “Resolution;” and (iii) stressing that Casimero’s has not fulfilled a mandatory title defense in over two (2) years. Based on the preceding facts and circumstances, the Committee requested Team Casimero to submit their arguments as to why the WBO should not declare the Bantamweight Championship Title “Vacant” accordingly.

On April 20, 2022, Team Casimero filed their brief and supported evidence in compliance with the Committee’s order. In essence, the arguments are: (i) Casimero fought in the U.K. in 2016 and used a sauna without incident as saunas during weight cutting are common practice in boxing and can be used safely; (ii) the “BBBofC” regulations prohibiting the use of saunas are not publicly available and do not give proper notice. The only reference of the board’s medical regulations is buried within the board’s website in one barely discernable sentence in a document entitled “Boxing, the Facts,” where it states the full details of all medical regulations and ringside safety rules are available upon request. There is no mention in the aforementioned documents alerting competitors that the common use of sauna is prohibited in the United Kingdom, and therefore, Team Casimero asserts lacking knowledge of whether those regulations exist and were properly adopted, or if the board is exceeding its authority in prohibiting that practice without the proper regulatory authority. Moreover, his Manager, Attorney and Team have petitioned the board for a copy of the regulation indicating that the use of saunas are prohibited and that the board has either failed and/or refused to provide those regulations.

Additionally, Casimero argued that the practice of the “BBBofC” to notify competitors of the sauna prohibition relies on a letter entitled “Important information for boxers seeking to be permitted by British Boxing Board of Control to fight in the United Kingdom.” Said letter was not provided to Casimero. There is no public



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document, rule, or regulation alerting contestants that the use of saunas is prohibited. Consequently, Casimero had no notice that the use of sauna was prohibited.

Conversely, Casimero contends that his opponent (Butler) admitted to the media on at least two (2) occasions that he had used a sauna, and at least, was fined, but not removed from the contest. Therefore, the board's selective enforcement of their rules in excluding Casimero is arbitrary and does not follow the board's precedent. Regarding Casimero's alarming weight reduction, his team argues suspecting the board's scale asserting its inaccuracy and denying that his health was affected as a result of the weight loss. Therefore, Casimero contends that his removal from his title defense was with neither a warning, fine nor reliable evidence.

Lastly, Casimero claims having no intention of violating the board's rules as he was unaware and could not be reasonably aware of the prohibition on the use of sauna. Because of Casimero's unintentional violation of what would appear to be a questionable regulation, selective enforcement of such regulation, and inconsistent discipline, Casimero should not be stripped of his WBO Bantamweight Champion status.

On April 22, 2022, Butler won the Interim version of the WBO Bantamweight Championship after defeating Jonas Sultan via unanimous decision. This bout was held at the Echo Arena in Liverpool, England, United Kingdom. Thereafter, on April 23, 2022, this Committee ordered Team Casimero to forward their arguments and positions to the British Boxing Board of Control considering that they are a party of interest in this controversy. As ordered, Team Casimero submitted their brief and supportive documents to the board. Having the board received Casimero's brief, their board ratified their position regarding Casimero's violation of the medical guidelines and consequently, their ruling was upheld prohibiting his participation.

Now, having this Committee considered the facts herein, having considered the arguments submitted by Team Casimero, having examined the relevant "Resolution" and applicable provisions, and having reviewed the WBO Regulations of World Championship Contests their applicability, and enforcement in this matter, and having the power, authority and discretion conferred by our rules, it is hereby determined as follows:

APPLICABLE PROVISIONS

All parties agree that they are bound by the WBO Regulations of World Championship Contests.

Section 35(f)ⁱⁱⁱ 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 Section 1(b)(8) and (23), respectively of the WBO Rules and Regulations of World Championship Contests, which provide, in relevant as follows:



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SECTION 1. WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP COMMITTEE

(b) The World Championship Committee shall have the following powers and discretion:

(8) To recommend to the President and the Executive Committee that a title should be vacated if a Champion fails to comply with the WBO World Championship Rules; and,

(23) To vacate a Championship title regardless of cause or fault if the Champion has not defended within a nine (9) month period

Furthermore, Section 19 (a) of the WBO Regulations is pertinent to this matter, which in relevant, states as follows:

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 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 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 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.

ANALYSIS

We begin our *ratio decidendi* referencing an excerpt of the WBO preamble², which in summary, asserts that the WBO World Championship is not the property of any boxer, including Casimero. The Championship is a trust, subject to the terms and conditions defined in the WBO Rules, and for the use and benefit of all boxers and boxing fans, who through their contribution of time, effort, risks, and resources sustain the existence of the profession. A World Champion is an integral part of the sport of boxing, but no World Champion is greater than the sport of boxing.

It is not the first instance that Casimero has triggered this Committee's intervention. As indicated in the statement of facts, just a day prior to his scheduled mandatory title defense obligation against Butler in Dubai, UAE, Casimero withdrew from the fight citing medical reasons.³ His withdrawal and subsequent postponement

² See, Preamble of the WBO Regulations of World Championship Contests

³ Casimero was diagnosed with a moderate to severe form of dehydration with viral Gastritis



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of his mandatory title defense was exclusively attributed to Casimero. Nonetheless, based on the medical documents filed by Casimero's Attorney, this Committee ruled that Casimero would retain his status as WBO World Bantamweight Champion.

Notwithstanding such ruling, and procuring that Casimero fully complied with his responsibilities, duties and obligations, we set forth specific provisions whereby failure to adhere thereto, would warrant this Committee's definitive action. These conditions were the following:

- (i) in the event that John Riel Casimero does not attend the official weigh-in for any reason whatsoever, the WBO Bantamweight Championship Title will be declared Vacant "Ipso Facto;" and
- (ii) (ii) in the event that John Riel Casimero is injured or suffers an injury, refuses to fight, or is unavailable to participate, fight, or engage for any reason whatsoever, the WBO Bantamweight Championship Title will be declared "Vacant," and John Riel Casimero shall be rated in the WBO Bantamweight World Ratings per the ABC and WBO Rating Criteria, respectively.

The above-referenced conditions were duly notified in writing to Casimero's team, including his Attorney and posted in our official WBO website and social media platforms, accordingly. Despite the preceding notice, "Probellum" rescheduled the WBO Bantamweight Mandatory Championship Contest per the conditions established in the purse bid proceeding as well as those set forth in our "Resolution." For a second time, the Casimero/Butler bout had an official date and venue, this time at the Echo Arena in Liverpool, England, United Kingdom. However, on April 19, 2022, the WBO acknowledged receipt of written correspondence from the British Boxing Board of Control (BBBofC), informing "Probellum" registered representative, Mr. Phil Jeffries that Casimero had use a sauna in proximity to his bout with Butler (April 22, 2022), and such actions constituted a violation of the board's medical guidelines. The Board advised Mr. Jeffries that they were in possession of supporting evidence, as well as indicating that Casimero's weight checks reflected an alarming reduction in weight of ten (10) pounds in only three (3) days. Also, the board stressed that Casimero was a reoffender concerning usage of a sauna in proximity to a professional bout, and that such prior conducts had resulted in Casimero's need of medical attention. Based on the findings rendered by the board, Casimero was prohibited to participate in his second scheduled WBO Mandatory title defense.

In wake of the board's ruling, Casimero failed to comply with the above-referenced provision. The wording of such condition is unambiguous, clear and definitive. If Casimero is unavailable to participate, fight or engage for whatever reason, the WBO Bantamweight Championship Title will be declared "Vacant." Nevertheless, Casimero's main contention lies in the board's failure to provide the fighter its medical regulations upon request, absent public access of these rules, and lack of proper notice pertaining to the prohibition of sauna use. In other words, Casimero asserts lacking knowledge of whether the board's regulations exist and were properly adopted or whether the board is exceeding its authority in prohibiting such practice without the proper regulatory authority. Therefore, Casimero argues that his actions were unintentional and that his removal from the bout against Butler was with neither a warning, fine nor reliable evidence, and requests that the WBO World Championship Committee does not strip him of his Bantamweight Championship based on a questionable regulation, selective enforcement of such regulation, and inconsistent discipline.



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DECISION - WBO WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP COMMITTEE

It is a standard practice in the World Boxing Organization (WBO), to grant full faith and credit to all records, rules, regulations, guidelines, and rulings from any duly authorized member boxing commission. As in this case, the British Boxing Board of Control (BBBofC) is a recognized regulatory body in the United Kingdom which oversees professional boxing contests conducted in their jurisdiction. The board rendered a ruling based on their findings and supportive evidence. Therefore, we must presume the correction of their holding even more so when related to a boxer's safety and physical well-being. This holding does not mean that Team Casimero is impaired from making any relevant claims thereto directly to the British Boxing Board of Control.

Now, to resolve the issue in question, we must enforce a straight-forward approach. Simply put, determined whether Casimero failed to comply with the WBO Regulations of World Championship Contests pursuant to the provisions contained in this Committee's "Resolution." This Committee is of the position that the conditions outlined in the "Resolution" are crystal clear. The relevant provision triggered upon the British Boxing Board of Control's ruling prohibiting Casimero to participate in his second scheduled WBO championship bout. Wherefore, Casimero was unavailable and consequently, failed to comply as ordered by this Committee.

Now, having carefully reviewed and appraised the facts stated herein, having examined the arguments submitted by Mr. Steve Pacitti Esq., representative for John Riel Casimero, having reviewed the British Boxing Board of Control's ruling and communications, having reviewed the relevant Championship Committee "Resolution" and applicable provisions, and having examined our governing rules and regulations, this Committee resolves as follows:

1. The Committee unanimously recommended to the WBO Executive Committee to strip John Riel Casimero's WBO World Bantamweight Championship Title for failure to comply with the conditions set forth in its "*Resolution.*"
2. The WBO Executive Committee unanimously voted in favor of adopting the WBO Championship Committee's recommendation and therefore declares the WBO Bantamweight Championship Title "Vacant."
3. WBO Interim Bantamweight Champion Paul Butler is elevated from Interim Champion to "Full Champion Status."
4. The WBO World Championship Committee recommends to the WBO Ratings Committee that John Riel Casimero be rated at the number one (1) position in the WBO Bantamweight Ratings and subject to complying with the applicable rating criteria.

This is a final decision of the WBO Ratings 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 Regulations, must be submitted in writing to the WBO President within fourteen (14) days of this decision as its sole and exclusive remedy.



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Dated: May 3, 2022
San Juan, Puerto Rico

WBO CHAMPIONSHIP COMMITTEE
By: Luis Batista Salas, Esq.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Luis Batista Salas".

Chairman/Championship Committee
1056 Muñoz Rivera Avenue, Suite 711
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00927
Ph: (787) 765-4628 Fax: (787) 758-9053
Email: www.wboboxing.com

Cc: Francisco Valcárcel, Esq./President
Steve Pacitti, Esq./Team Casimero
Egis Klimas/Team Casimero
Jose Manuel de la Cruz/Team Casimero
John Hornewer, Esq./Team Casimero
Pat English, Esq./Team Casimero
Robert Smith/BBBofC
Steve Lunas/Team Casimero
Jayson Casimero/Team Casimero
Paul Butler

ⁱ See, <https://www.wboboxing.com/boxing-news/amended-resolution-john-riel-casimero/>

ⁱⁱ See, <https://www.spin.ph/boxing/john-riel-casimero-faces-acts-of-lasciviousness-complaint-a1374-20220221>

ⁱⁱⁱ See, WBO Regulation §35(f).