



WORLD BOXING ORGANIZATION

In the matter of the Jr. Middleweight Division

Parties:

Mr. Sampson Lewkowicz

Promoter

WBO Jr. Middleweight Champion, Sebastian Fundora

Mr. Bob Arum

Promoter

On behalf of WBO #1 Jr. Middleweight Contender, Xander Zayas

Mr. Harrison Whitman

Advisor

On behalf of WBO Interim Jr. Middleweight Champion, Terence Crawford

Issues Presented

Whether current WBO #1 world-rated junior middleweight contender Xander Zayas (hereinafter “Zayas”) is deserving and worthy of the mandatory challenger designation in the aforementioned weight category due to current WBO interim junior middleweight titleholder Terence Crawford’s decision to relinquish his title at the appropriate time, thereby forfeiting his mandatory challenger designation status. Having reviewed Zayas’ professional record and compliance with the criteria set forth in our governing regulations, this Committee responds in the affirmative.

Statement of Facts

Our intervention in this matter is triggered by the official announcement of the Terence Crawford vs. Canelo Alvarez Super Middleweight Championship, scheduled to take place in September in Las Vegas, Nevada, United States of America. As a result, the WBO consulted with Team Crawford (hereinafter “Crawford”) to inquire about his status as WBO interim junior middleweight champion—most notably, whether he intended to enforce his mandatory challenger right against current WBO

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junior middleweight champion Sebastian Fundora (hereinafter “Fundora”). This enforcement would terminate his interim champion status, as the WBO recognizes only one world champion per weight class in accordance with WBO policy.

After multiple conversations with Team Crawford, the WBO received confirmation that:

- (i) Crawford would not return to the junior middleweight division, and
- (ii) upon the official announcement of the Canelo/Crawford bout, he would relinquish his interim junior middleweight championship.

This decision would ultimately nullify his status as the mandatory challenger in the junior middleweight division.

On March 14, 2025, the WBO received an email from Mr. Harrison Whitman (hereinafter “Crawford’s Advisor”) confirming that Team Crawford had no objection to the WBO naming Xander Zayas the mandatory challenger for the WBO junior middleweight championship.

This Committee has no objection to Team Crawford’s request, especially given Crawford’s extraordinary accomplishments and long-standing relationship with the WBO. Crawford’s professional résumé is truly remarkable and speaks for itself:

- **Perfect professional record:** 41 wins, 0 losses
- **Knockouts:** 31 KOs
- **Titles held:**
 - WBO Lightweight Champion
 - WBO Junior Welterweight Champion
 - WBO Welterweight Champion
 - WBO Junior Middleweight Champion (Interim)
 - 2-Division Undisputed World Champion (140 lbs. & 147 lbs.)

Recognitions & Achievements:

- Considered boxing’s pound-for-pound king
- 19 world championship bouts
- 15 of those 19 world championship bouts won by KO or TKO
- WBO Super Champion distinction (rights and privileges)

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- 2 WBO Special Rings for consecutive successful title defenses
- 4-Division WBO World Champion

In light of these facts and circumstances, this Committee will allow Crawford to officially relinquish his interim WBO junior middleweight title at the appropriate time, coinciding with the formal announcement of the Canelo bout. On behalf of the WBO, we wish Crawford and Team Crawford the best of luck in his pursuit of greatness in what will be a historic world championship bout against boxing's biggest star: three-division WBO world champion and reigning unified super middleweight champion Canelo Alvarez. In closing, the WBO's doors will always remain open to Crawford.

Now, with the mandatory obligation in the junior middleweight division unresolved, this Committee must determine whether the current #1 world-rated contender, Xander Zayas, is deserving of such designation.

Xander Zayas' Professional Record & Merits

Xander Zayas holds an undefeated professional record of **21 wins (13 by KO)**. He entered the WBO world rankings at **#11 in the junior middleweight division in August 2022**. The following month (September), he moved up to **#10**, and by December, he was ranked **#7** following his **first successful defense of his NABO title via unanimous decision against Alexis Salazar (24-4-0)**. This bout took place on **December 10, 2022, at Madison Square Garden (MSG), New York, New York**.

- **February 2023:** Moved to #6 due to normal ranking adjustments.
- **March 2023:** Elevated to #5, following Tim Tszyu's exclusion from the rankings after winning the interim title (due to Jermell Charlo's injury).
- **June 2023:** Moved to #4 after successfully defending his regional belt via unanimous decision against Ronald Cruz (18-2-1) at MSG.
- **September 2023:** Defeated Roberto Valenzuela Jr. (26-4-0) via TKO, advancing to #3.
- **October 2023:** Moved to #2 after Brian Mendoza was removed from the rankings following his loss to WBO junior middleweight champion Tim Tszyu.
- **December 2023:** Successfully defended his NABO title against Jorge Fortea (24-3-1) via TKO at Charles Dodge City Center, Pembroke Pines, Miami, Florida.

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Following five months of inactivity and a temporary demotion in the rankings, Zayas returned on **June 8, 2024**, with another successful NABO title defense against then-#8 world-rated contender and former WBO junior middleweight champion Patrick Teixeira (34-4-0), winning via unanimous decision at MSG. This victory elevated Zayas back to **#3 in the WBO junior middleweight rankings**.

- **September 27, 2024:** Defended his NABO title against Damian Sosa (25-2-0), winning via unanimous decision at MSG, which propelled him to #1 in October 2024.
- **February 2025:** Defeated world-rated contender Slawa Spomer (20-0-0) via TKO, solidifying his #1 ranking. Spomer was then ranked #11 by the WBO.

Summary of Zayas' Professional Merits:

- **Undefeated professional record: 21-0 (13 KOs)**
- **North American Boxing Organization (NABO) Champion**
- **Five consecutive successful regional title defenses**
- **Defeated two world-rated WBO junior middleweight contenders in the past eight months**
- **Highest world-rated challenger in the WBO junior middleweight division**
- **Compliant with WBO & ABC ratings criteria**

Mandatory Title Defense Regulations

All WBO champions must defend their titles **at intervals no greater than nine (9) months** from either the date of acquisition or their last mandatory defense, unless an exception is granted by the Championship Committee. See **Section 5 of the WBO Regulations of World Championship Contests**.

The Committee may vacate a champion's title, regardless of cause or fault, if the champion fails to defend within the 9-month period. See Section 5 of the WBO Regulations of World Championship Contests.

WBO Junior Middleweight Championship Obligations

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WBO junior middleweight champion **Sebastian Fundora** (hereinafter “Fundora”) won the title by defeating then-champion Tim Tszyu via split decision on **March 30, 2024, at T-Mobile Arena, Las Vegas, Nevada**. It is a matter of public record that the **WBO mandatory title defense is overdue**, and Fundora **must fulfill this obligation** in compliance with WBO rules and regulations.

Furthermore, under the **mandatory rotation system** for unified or undisputed champions, the **oldest mandatory obligation must be fulfilled first**. Consequently, the WBO is next in line, and **Fundora must comply with his mandatory defense obligations against the challenger designated by the WBO**.

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 1 (b) and (19) (f), (g), and (h), respectively of the WBO Rules and Regulations of World Championship Contests, which provide, in relevant as follows:

Section 6. Designation of Mandatory Challenger

(a) The Mandatory Challenger may be selected and determined by the World Championship Committee according to the current list of the best-classified boxers, promulgated by the WBO Classification Committee. The World Championship Committee shall for good cause designate the date on which the determination of the Mandatory Challenger shall be determined. For the purpose of designating the Mandatory Challenger, the current list of the Classifications is that which corresponds to the month for which the

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designation of the Mandatory Challenger is to be made that the World Champion is obliged to defend his Title against the Mandatory Challenger, or any other date in which the World Championship Committee may determine, for just cause.

(b) When a Champion must make a mandatory defense, the Mandatory Challenger shall be the highest classified available boxer who, in the judgment of the World Championship Committee, best satisfies the following criteria:

(1) Has a record acceptable to the World Championship Committee, and who, because of accomplishment and achievement, is recognized by the World Championship Committee as a class boxer; and

(2) Complies with the WBO and Association of Boxing Commissions Criteria for the Ratings of Professional Boxers; and

(3) In the event that the Champion has a contract with a major television network (HBO, SHOWTIME, ZDF, Sky or other similar broadcast company), is an acceptable challenger to the Champion's television network.

(c) A classified boxer may request recognition as Mandatory Challenger in writing to the WBO on a form which contain substantially the provisions of the Application for Designation as Mandatory Contender contained on the WBO web site. Alternatively, the Committee may designate a Mandatory Challenger based on the above criteria. In either event, the Mandatory Challenger must agree to be subject to and to abide by the Regulations and to be bound to participate in and comply with the results of a purse bid. The World Championship Committee may deny a request for recognition based on any of the above referred criteria or because the Champion has an approved unification bout, or an approved unification tournament is scheduled, or if the Champion is contesting the Championship with a WBO Super Champion or a WBO Champion, or for other good cause.

(d) If a fighter is classified higher than the Mandatory Challenger and is not designated the Mandatory Challenger because of criteria three (3), or for other good cause, the Championship Committee has the authority to order an eliminatory bout between the higher classified boxer or boxers provided that at least one of the elimination bout contestants is considered an acceptable challenger to the Champion's broadcast company. The winner of the elimination bout shall be then designated the Mandatory Challenger.

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(e) The designation of a Mandatory Challenger creates an obligation on behalf of the Champion to defend against the designated Mandatory Challenger as a condition to the Champion's retention of the title. This obligation may be subject to modification or extension by the Championship Committee for good cause, such as (but not limited to) participation by the Champion in a unification bout or a unification tournament on such terms and conditions as the Championship Committee approves. The designation of Mandatory Challenger does not create rights in the Challenger, and may be subject to such conditions, modification, or extension as the Championship Committee determines.

(f) That a Champion has signed a contract for the defense of his championship, even against a Mandatory Challenger approved and designated by the Committee, shall not of itself constitute compliance with these Regulations, unless the Championship defense actually takes place within the stipulated time period.

Section 8. Criteria to Maintain Ratings as a Classified Fighter

(a) To keep his position on the official WBO classification list and to be eligible to be designated by the World Championship Committee as the Mandatory Challenger, contender number 1 and contender number 2 shall defend his classification at least annually against any of the classified contenders in his weight category, according to the current list of classifications promulgated by the Classifications Committee, and he shall comply with the Association of Boxing Commissions Criteria for Ratings of Professional Boxers. If contender number 1 and/or contender number 2 fails to comply with this Rule, contender number 1 and/or contender number 2 may lose his classification. It is the responsibility of each classified boxer to know the WBO and ABC Criteria for Ratings, to meet the criteria for ratings, and to keep the WBO Classification Committee informed of all facts relevant to his rating.

(b) If any of the classified boxers (with the exception of contender number 1 and/or contender number 2) rejects the World Champion in an optional title fight or refuses to fight contender number 1 and/or contender number 2 in a ten-round fight, without just cause, he may be eliminated from or lowered in the list of classifications.

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Analysis

We begin our ratio decidendi by referencing an excerpt from the WBO Preamble, which states in relevant part:

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

The issue in the instant case requires consideration of numerous factors, including but not limited to:

- (i) Mr. Xander Zayas’ world rating;
- (ii) Whether Mr. Xander Zayas has complied with §§ 6 and 8 of the World Boxing Organization Regulations of World Championship Contests.

From the outset, we must highlight the following:

1. Zayas has occupied the highest position in the WBO Jr. Middleweight World Ratings (number one spot) since October 2024.
2. Within the last eight months, he has defeated two WBO world-rated contenders; his professional merits speak for themselves, and this Committee considers him a class boxer.
3. He has undoubtedly satisfied the criteria outlined in Sections 6 and 8 of our governing regulations.
4. He will certainly be considered by the Champion’s (Fundora) streaming or TV outlet as an acceptable challenger.

Therefore, after carefully considering the arguments presented, assessing the professional merits of Xander Zayas, and reviewing the applicable provisions relevant to this matter, this Committee is of the opinion that Zayas, as the highest available contender in the Jr. Middleweight Division, is deserving of the mandatory challenger designation. This determination is based on the facts, professional merits, and compliance with the relevant rules and regulations outlined above.

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Decision WBO World Championship Committee

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

1. This Committee hereby designates WBO Number One Jr. Middleweight Contender, **Xander Zayas**, as the **Mandatory Challenger** in the WBO Jr. Middleweight Division.
2. **Sebastian Fundora must fulfill his WBO Mandatory Title Defense obligation in his next bout against Xander Zayas.** Failure to do so will result in this Committee proceeding in accordance with WBO rules and regulations.
3. **Sebastian Fundora will not be permitted any intervening bouts.**
4. **Team Fundora and Team Zayas shall commence negotiations immediately** to fulfill the WBO Mandatory Title Defense pursuant to WBO rules and regulations.
5. **Team Fundora and Team Zayas have 20 days to reach terms**, after which a purse bid proceeding will be ordered if an agreement is not reached.
6. The minimum bid in the Jr. Middleweight Division is \$200,000.
7. This Committee reserves the right to issue any further rulings necessary, helpful, and convenient to accomplish the purposes, policies, and intent of the WBO rules and regulations, including rulings that best serve the sport of boxing and the WBO Jr. Middleweight Division.
8. This Resolution is definitive, final, and enforceable.

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This is a final decision of the **WBO Championship Committee**. The affected WBO participant may appeal this determination to the Complaint and Grievance Committee pursuant to 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 the sole and exclusive remedy.

Yours Truly

Luis Batista Salas, Esq.

Cc: Jeremy Koegel/TR
Tom Brown/TGB Promotions
Carl Moretti/TR



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