

# Chapter 6

## There is right. There is wrong.

A Chronology of the Mike Tyson-Lennox Lewis Fight: *Flying Me Back to Memphis*

### TYSON-LEWIS BRAWL:

#### WHEN WILL BOXING DRAW THE LINE?

by [Eddie Goldman](#) (January 23, 2002) Photo Tom Casino

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NEW YORK, Jan. 23 -- It is happening all over boxing, and all over sports. Press conferences involving most of the biggest fights of the last several months, including Bernard Hopkins and Felix Trinidad, Lennox Lewis and Hasim Rahman, Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales, and Oscar De La Hoya and Fernando Vargas, have all devolved into undisciplined, ugly brawls. A Top Rank publicist, Ricardo Jimenez, suffered a fractured knee at the De La Hoya-Vargas melee, and now 70-year old WBC president Jose Sulaiman suffers a concussion at the Tyson-Lewis skirmish.



Although the form of boxing's madness is often its own, none of this outlaw behavior is unique to boxing. In football, a late hit by Philadelphia's Hugh Douglas knocked Bears' quarterback Jim Miller out of their divisional playoff game last Saturday. The Lakers' Shaquille O'Neal received a three-game suspension and a fine after trying to slug Chicago's Brad Miller on Jan. 12. And that's only from this week's headlines.

Despite the general disappearance of sportsmanship as a value rewarded in the sports world, boxing's extra-curricular brawling is viewed suspiciously by the public. Although he was not there, ESPN's Michael Wilbon loudly proclaimed on the talk show "Pardon the Interruption" that the Tyson-Lewis fight was staged. This skepticism was shared by many ESPN.com readers, who are voting on a poll question asking, "Was the Mike Tyson-Lennox Lewis fracas scripted?" They are responding "Yes" by about a two-to-one margin.

Basketbrawl, footbrawl, basebrawl, and all those other team sports populated with all our bubble gum card role models all supposedly have rules, sanctions, and league structures to clamp down on the increasing trend of on-field melees. Their effectiveness is another question. But boxing does not even have anything close to these sometimes watered down regulatory structures.

When will the line be drawn in boxing? When someone is killed at one of these press conferences? When someone sues the fighters, promoters, buildings, television companies, and everyone else involved in profiting from the mountain of free publicity these spectacles generate? What are the existing regulators waiting for?

It apparently doesn't matter to many in boxing that so much of the public regards it as even more corrupt and having more pre-arranged fights and more staged confrontations than it actually has. And yet these same people cry that network television and potential sponsors have abandoned boxing, and relegate it to cable television and pay-per-view.

Mike Tyson may have yesterday warned the writer who yelled that he should be placed in a straitjacket, "I'll f\*\*\* you till you love me, faggot!" Yet boxing seems essentially to repeat this same message of love to its fans, its fighters, its sponsors, and its television networks.

The issue is far larger than whatever the Nevada State Athletic Commission decides to do next Tuesday when it meets to vote on Tyson's application to be re-licensed. Already many are speculating that the deciding factor will be the interests of the MGM Grand Garden Arena in filling up its 17,157 seats at this fight on April 6. Time will tell. We know what any other sport would do in such a case.

But the Nevada commission is appointed by a governor in a state where gambling interests predominate and bankroll

both political parties. Thus even the Nevada commission, the strongest and most conscientious of these state bodies and the most committed to fighter safety, can only go so far in reining in boxing's bad boys, no matter how destructive their actions may be to the sport's image and long-term financial viability. It may be that the short-term ticket sales, and the state revenues garnered from them, count the most.

However the Nevada commission rules in this particular case, such a spreading cancer can only be treated by some type of national commission or regulatory body that is unshackled by the financial chains of our modern day, well-mannered Mr. Gray's -- the promoters, the casinos, and the television networks. While some still talk about the need for such a national commission, such as the irrepressible Teddy Atlas, there seems about as much chance of one being created any time soon as there is of placing a photo of John Walker on a U.S. postage stamp.

Unless boxing itself, or someone who cares enough about boxing, draws the line soon, this cancer will only grow. That what will likely be the largest money-making fight in years has been now jeopardized by this brawl is being lost on a lot of people.

When will boxing draw the line? Probably not until it is too late.

#### Discussion

1. Do you think Tyson-Lewis promoters staged this fight? Why/why not?
2. What is the effect on society when individuals such as Tyson continue to be permitted & promoted to compete?
3. What would you do if you were a member of boxing's regulating commission in this situation?

#### Tyson fight a 'Super Bowl' for city

Euphoric Herenton sees revenue far greater than cost

**By David Williams**  
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March 26, 2002

The biggest sporting event in Memphis history is set: Boxing's heavyweight champion, Lennox Lewis, and its most controversial figure, Mike Tyson, will fight June 8 at The Pyramid. "I'm in a state of euphoria," said Memphis Mayor Willie Herenton, who promised fight promoters the city's support in landing a bout that was originally set for Las Vegas and seemingly bound for Washington two weeks ago. Herenton said he'll hold a press conference today to discuss security, transportation and other issues. He said the cost to the city isn't known, but added that "tax receipts being generated for this fight will be far greater than the minuscule public expenditures."

The bout will be a joint pay-per-view telecast of cable TV networks Showtime and HBO. Ticket prices have not been set, but Pyramid general manager Alan Freeman has estimated they could range from \$300 to \$500 on the low end to ringside seats costing \$2,500 to \$3,000.

The fight announcement came late Monday afternoon, although a major issue - a \$12.5 million site fee - apparently remains unsettled. Nashville-based promotion company Prize Fight Boxing said it has letters of credit for more than \$4 million toward the site fee and has been given until Wednesday to secure the rest. Prize Fight officials say the shortfall was the result of First Tennessee Bank declining late last week to issue a letter of credit for the promotion company's West Tennessee investor group. Prize Fight's Brian Young said the bank cited a "moral issue," apparently related to Tyson, who was convicted of rape in 1992 and bit the ears of Evander Holyfield in a 1997 bout. "We're still looking at Wednesday to get everything settled out," said Prize Fight's Mike Lampley.

Showtime reportedly offered a financial guarantee of less than \$12.5 million to ensure the fight takes place. A spokesman for the cable network would not comment on the reports. However, Lampley said Showtime is part of a "Plan B" for part of the site fee, if Prize Fight is unable to secure letters of credit for the full \$12.5 million. "That is a real strong possibility and a backup plan," Lampley said. The fact that organizers announced the fight Monday suggests they're confident the site fee will be paid, even if the source is unsettled. Tyson adviser Shelly Finkel told The Associated Press that some fight details are pending, but they wouldn't halt the fight. "We now have close to 11 weeks before the fight, and I believe

everything is fine," Finkel said. Fight organizers were working against a Monday International Boxing Federation deadline to set the fight. Had the deadline passed, Lewis would have had to fight No. 1 challenger Chris Byrd or risk losing his title.

Lewis (39-2-1 with 30 knockouts) is from London, giving the bout an international flavor. In a press release announcing the fight, he was quoted saying, "I am confident I will cement my legacy when I dispose of Tyson on June 8." Tyson (49-3 with two no-contests and 43 knockouts) is an American and former champion. "I will knock Lewis out and regain my heavyweight championship," he said in the press release.

Before the fighters meet in the ring for the first time, they're expected to train at Tunica County casinos. Gary Shaw, chief operating officer for Lewis promoter Main Events, said he spent Monday in Tunica meeting with casino officials. He said the casinos that will serve as fight camps have not been determined. The proximity to the casinos was considered a major part of Memphis's bid.

Shaw said another key for Memphis was Herenton, a former Golden Gloves fighter who was "very instrumental" in attracting the fight. Herenton said, "The Tyson-Lewis fight was a business decision for me as mayor. And it's going to bring visitors from all around the world." The Memphis Convention & Visitors Bureau says the city has the resources to handle them, with nearly 20,000 hotel rooms in Shelby County and more than 6,000 in Tunica County. "We've got more than enough rooms," said John Oros, the CVB's executive vice president. He said a large number of downtown rooms have been blocked out by "major companies," including HBO and Showtime. Oros said Lennox Lewis Travel - billed on its Internet site as "the only official travel company" for the champ - also has secured hotel rooms around the city. "This is, for all intents and purposes, a 20,000-person Super Bowl for us," Oros said.

The fight comes less than a year after Memphis landed its first major league sports franchise, the NBA's Grizzlies, who play in The Pyramid while awaiting construction of a new arena. The biggest single sporting event held in Memphis - in terms of national exposure and pre-event hype - likely was Paul 'Bear' Bryant's last game as coach of the University of Alabama football team in the 1982 Liberty Bowl.

"It's incredible," said Joe Cooper, a local businessman and County Commission candidate who sought to attract the fight to Memphis. "This will be without a doubt the biggest thing to hit our community ever, in terms of an economic positive and a public relations positive." There have been reports of strong opposition to the fight in other possible sites, including Washington. But in Memphis the refrain mostly has been positive, with boosters citing the potential financial benefits. For The Pyramid, it means another rental payment - in an amount Freeman declines to disclose - and another high-profile event, following visits by such NBA stars as Michael Jordan and Shaquille O'Neal.

Showtime and HBO production staff members spent an hour and a half at The Pyramid on Monday looking at possible camera positions and media accommodations. Freeman said he has an agreement in principle with Prize Fight Boxing for use of the building. The Pyramid - the site of three boxing cards in 1993 - is expected to seat about 20,400 for the fight.

### Lewis vs. Tyson March 26, 2002

- Matchup:** Heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis (39-2-1 with 30 knockouts) vs. Mike Tyson (49-3 with 43 knockouts).
- When:** June 8, beginning at 8 p.m. with the undercard.
- Where:** The Pyramid.
- Other bouts:** The undercard bouts have not been set.
- Tickets:** Prices were not announced. Alan Freeman, general manager of The Pyramid, said prices could range from \$300 to \$500 on the low end to ringside seats at \$2,500 to \$3,000.
- TV:** It will be a pay-per-view only telecast; price not set. HBO and Showtime will jointly produce and distribute the telecast.

#### Discussion

1. Who most profits from having this bout in Memphis?
  - a. S \_\_\_\_\_ & H \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. P \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. T \_\_\_\_\_ & L \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. C \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. H \_\_\_\_\_

## Nashville group in fight mix

By David Williams

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March 27, 2002

Nashville-based Prize Fight Boxing is "definitely" expected to be involved in promotion of the Lennox Lewis-Mike Tyson heavyweight title fight June 8 at The Pyramid, Tyson adviser Shelly Finkel said Tuesday. Prize Fight's role had been in doubt since last Thursday, when the company's west Tennessee investor group's \$12.5 million site fee to the fighters' organizations hit a snag. Finkel said he's been told by Prize Fight that the site fee issues are mostly settled. "It's just some things that need to be finished off," he said. Prize Fight's Mike Lampley said there were some "small details to work out," but declined to elaborate.

Prize Fight's Brian Young declined to comment on financial issues. But Young previously said First Tennessee Bank declined at the 11th hour Thursday to issue a letter of credit for the investor group, citing a "moral issue" apparently related to Tyson, the sport's most controversial figure because of incidents in and out of the ring. But Finkel said he's been told by Prize Fight that the financial snags are close to being overcome. "I definitely see Mike and Brian involved," Finkel said.

### Other developments:

□ **Ticket update:** Information on ticket prices and availability may be "at least a week away," said Pyramid general manager Alan Freeman. He has estimated ticket costs could range from \$300 to \$500 on the low end to ringside seats costing \$2,500 to \$3,000. "This is going to be a little bit different than selling tickets to George Strait or Disney on Ice," Freeman said. "What we want to do - and what all the parties want to do - is issue an oversized souvenir ticket, which somewhat negates your ability to sell tickets through Ticketmaster (outlets). "Now, Ticketmaster still would be the ticketing company, but it won't be like you can go up to a Piggly Wiggly store and buy a ticket (at the store's Ticketmaster outlet).

"My guess is - other than the blocks of tickets that are going to the fighters' camps and different promoters that are involved with this - that the bulk of these tickets will be sold through the Internet, phone systems, and hopefully we'll have tickets at The Pyramid box office." To receive ticket information when it becomes available, Freeman suggested signing up for E-mail updates on the arena's Internet site at [www.pyramidarena.com](http://www.pyramidarena.com).

□ **Pay-per-view update:** Details of Showtime and HBO's joint pay-per-view of the fight likely are about two weeks away. "We're working on those details as we speak," said Marina Capurro, Showtime's vice president of communications. She said an announcement of the undercard likely will come "within a month."

□ **Training camp update:** The fighters' training camps - expected to be at Tunica County casinos - could be announced in about a week, Finkel said. However, Lewis has another option: Hot Springs, Ark. The Hot Springs Advertising and Promotion Commission reportedly has sent a letter to Lewis asking him to consider the town as a training site. "I know it's a longshot, but you don't know if you don't ask," said Steve Arrison, the commission's executive director.

### Discussion

1. Why do you think 1<sup>st</sup> Tennessee Bank isn't interested in supporting the fight?
  - A. Who are their clients and how many of their clients are likely to attend the fight?
  - B. Do you agree with their position?
2. Why are they making the ticket an oversized souvenir ticket?
3. What is the primary means of ticket distribution? Why is this important, given the target market?

### Now, real fight's for hotel rooms, limos

'Willing to pay anything,' fans world over say

By Ron Higgins

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March 27, 2002

The financial windfall from the Lennox Lewis-Mike Tyson world championship heavyweight fight hit the Memphis-area tourist industry with the force of a right hook. "If I heard it once, I've heard it a thousand times — 'I'm willing to pay anything,'" said Doug Edwards, general manager of the Downtown Marriott about fight fans seeking hotel rooms. "Anybody who's anybody is trying to put the squeeze on us. George W. Bush himself couldn't get a room right now."

From hard-to-find hotel rooms to booked limousines to travel agencies seeking fight tickets and hotel rooms, the June 8 Lewis-Tyson fight at The Pyramid is creating a buzz unlike any sporting event the city has seen. Ticket prices haven't been announced. That hasn't stopped The Pyramid Web site, which normally gets 1,000 to 2,000 hits per hour, from getting 70,000 hits per hour Tuesday and topping out at 100,000 around lunchtime.

"I talked to Ticketmaster, and they've been getting so many calls, it's like the fight is tomorrow," said Alan Freeman, general manager of The Pyramid. At the Memphis Convention and Visitors Bureau, switchboard operator Janet Royer opened the lines at 6:45 a.m., more than an hour earlier than usual. Immediately, the phones started ringing and didn't stop. "People want to know about housing, they want to know about tickets, they want to know about everything," Royer said. "We've had a lot of international calls."

That's to be expected because of British boxer Lewis and his fan following. "I think 4,000 to 5,000 English will try to come over," said Edward Rom, a partner in Lennox Lewis Travel of Middlesex, England. "It all depends on ticket distribution."

Where will everyone stay? Certainly not downtown, where fight promoters Gary Shaw of Main Events and Brian Young of Prize Fight Boxing, as well as TV entities Showtime and HBO, have blocked off large numbers of rooms for most of fight week. The rush for hotels began two weeks ago when talk of the Lewis-Tyson fight began. "We're used to having sellouts," said Gregg Herning, director of sales for The Peabody. "What's a new twist for us might be the amount of Hollywood dignitaries that we're expecting. That's something we're very excited about."

Next door at the Radisson, all 280 rooms are gone. "We already had two wedding parties booked here before the fight, and we got swamped all day from calls all over the country," said Sonjia Moore, group residence coordinator. "They hit us hard and fast, and we're done."

In Tunica, Miss., where both fighters will likely train at casino sites, hotel rooms are also a precious commodity. Webster Franklin, executive director of the Tunica Visitor and Convention Bureau, said about 1,000 to 1,200 casino hotel rooms have been blocked by promoters Shaw and Young for fight week. Franklin also said that the 10 casinos would individually block out rooms for its favored clients. "We have about 6,300 hotel rooms in Tunica, all but 500 or 600 in casinos," Franklin said. "We have rooms available, but they should go fast. I can see people staying as far away as Jackson, Tenn., and Little Rock for this fight."

Most of the travel packages being put together for the fight will come from outside of Memphis. "We've checked, and a lot of rooms have already been taken by outside agencies who specialize in sporting event packages," said Vicki Rush, chief operating officer of A&I Travel Service Inc. in Memphis. "And there's not much you can do when ticket prices haven't been set."

The high-rollers that frequent the casinos, as well as other high-profile visitors, are snapping up every available limo. And like the hotels, it's not just for the day before and the day of the fight. It's for at least a week. Jim Hagmaier, owner of Limo Express, is leasing 60 limos for the event. He has 20 of his own and is bringing in 40 from out of town.

"This will be the biggest thing Memphis has ever seen," Hagmaier said. "I've worked the last six Super Bowls, and it will compare with a Super Bowl. You'll have high-rollers and gamblers come here, you'll have high-profile athletes from all over who'll want to be at the fight."

Ham Smythe IV, president of Yellow Cab, Checker Cab and Premier Transportation, has mixed feelings about the Lewis-Tyson circus. He likes the business but said he doesn't want to ignore his regular customers in the process. "In New York or Las Vegas, this (fight) is no big impact," Smythe said. "Here, it's like a pig going through a python."

#### **Discussion**

1. Who else seems to be profiting from the event?
2. Can you think of some ways you might be able to make some money on this?
3. What kind of clientele is this fight attracting?

4. Do you, personally, care how you make your money? Suppose you were Sonjia Moore at the Radisson and could cancel reservations for the wedding groups so that you sell the rooms at double the normal rate to others coming for the fight. Would you do it?

### Few cheers heard among women's leaders here

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March 27, 2002

Mike Tyson doesn't appear to have many fans among Memphis's leaders in the promotion of women's causes. Their reactions to news that Tyson will box here on June 8 were mixed but generally not welcoming. His rape conviction and reputation for violence inside and outside the ring are reasons most say they don't think Memphis should host his match with heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis.

"I would say it's not a good thing that Mike Tyson is coming to Memphis," said Virginia Stallworth, a past president of the Memphis chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW). "He is a rapist. And to rally around and support a violent sex offender is an insult not only to women, but to this entire community. Mike Tyson is out of control and he should not be supported, cheered or otherwise glorified."

"I'm conflicted," said Jocelyn Wurzburg, a lawyer and professional mediator who has been outspoken on women's issues. "I know all the wonderful benefits it's going to bring to Memphis money-wise. It sure hurts my heart, though, that's how we've got to make it." She said, "Sports and athletics are supposed to conjure up heroes for kids. And this man is certainly not any kind of role model."

Phyllis Betts, acting director of the Center for Research on Women at the University of Memphis, doesn't personally support boxing but is not against others having the opportunity to watch it. "This is the kind of thing that I and I'm sure a lot of other people — and that probably means an overrepresentation of women — don't find very attractive or something we would like for the city to be known for. But at the same time I realize diversity also means people enjoying forms of entertainment that I, myself, might not personally choose." She added, "Even if it weren't Tyson I would have misgivings, but I would probably maintain the same position that this is not what I'm going to go to the mat for."

Dr. Rosie Phillips Bingham, assistant vice-president of student affairs at UofM, said, "For some people it's a bad thing because of Michael Tyson's history, but I think the mayor makes a good point when he says it's good economics for the city. .|.|. "I don't think that we're glorifying Mike Tyson. .|.|. I think if we could be accused of anything it maybe would be that we put profit over morals or something like that."

For Paula Casey, the fight is a low blow to residents. The political activist is also a YWCA board member and co-founder of the Women's Political Caucus in 1983. "He (Tyson) is disgusting. He's a convicted rapist. He bites off men's ears. He attacks women. He has no respect for women. And that kind of behavior is encouraged. And I want to know how much it's going to cost taxpayers. "The 25th anniversary of Elvis Presley's death is going to bring more money and more tourists into this city than that ear-biting rapist ever will."

### Discussion

1. What might be the effect for bout sponsors among women?
2. Is there much overlap between the target market for this fight and these various women's groups?
3. Assume that you side with the views of these women with respect to Tyson. Would it be worth it to organize your social activist group to protest or engage in some other activity to disrupt the fight?

### Holders of suites get primo fight seats

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March 28, 2002

Suite-holders at The Pyramid are getting a sweet deal for the Lennox Lewis-Mike Tyson heavyweight title bout on June 8. They'll have the use of their suites and the usual perks - including 18 tickets and four parking passes - at no additional cost. They also have the right to buy six additional standing-room tickets.

Pyramid general manager Alan Freeman said Wednesday that Prize Fight Boxing, the Nashville-based promotion company that negotiated an agreement with the arena, sought control of the suites for the fight. "I simply explained to them that that was unacceptable to us," Freeman said. "We have firm contracts with suite-holders and I couldn't really deviate from that."

The suite-holders - who pay \$30,000 to \$65,000 annually - have rights for University of Memphis basketball games and all other non-Grizzlies events in the arena. There are separate suite leases for Grizzlies games. The Pyramid has 28 suites, 19 of which are leased for U of M games and other non-Grizzlies events. Freeman declined when asked to release a list of suite-holders, which include The Commercial Appeal. "I don't feel it's appropriate," he said.

Two Pyramid suites are used for handicapped seating. The city and county - which jointly own the building - each have a suite, as does the University of Memphis. The remaining four suites are not leased. Freeman said Prize Fight was given control of two of those suites for the fight, with the arena controlling the other two. Freeman said a decision hasn't been made on the arena's two suites, but he said they could be used for VIP seating.

The fight is expected to be a tough ticket - drawing international interest - and an expensive one, as well. Ticket prices have not been announced. But Freeman has estimated that ticket costs could range from \$300 to \$500 for the upper arena to ringside seats costing \$2,500 to \$3,000. Suite-holders are not permitted to sublease their suites for an event, according to their contract with the building.

Freeman said he has an agreement in principle with Prize Fight, which is expected to be a local promoter for the bout. He said a contract could be signed after Prize Fight's involvement is finalized.

## Discussion

1. What does this situation regarding suites teach us about the way you might want to write suite contracts at major venues?
2. Given the way the contracts were written, what do you think the Pyramids' objectives were? Or do you think they had any?

## National columnists get in their jabs over bout

Lewis-Tyson fight draws plenty of fire for Memphis

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March 28, 2002

Never mind that the mayor is in a "state of euphoria" and enthusiastic fans continue to wonder when they can snatch up tickets. Columnists across the nation have been taking shots at Memphis since the announcement that Lennox Lewis and Mike Tyson will fight at The Pyramid on June 8. And Geoff Calkins has nothing to do with it. We swear.

From New York to Los Angeles and in between, one scribe after another is poking fun at Elvis and Mud Island (Where's the originality, guys?) and ribs (Hey, what's wrong with our ribs?!) and nearly everything else connected to Memphis. Granted, it is publicity - any press is good press, right? - but few are holding the Bluff City in high regard these days.

People are questioning Memphis's ability to host such an event. And more importantly, people are questioning why Memphis would want to host such an event. As Chicago columnist Jay Mariotti, bluntly wrote:

Congratulations Memphis. You lose.

He continued.

Sports has produced its share of debacles, but few have been this hideous. Here we are, concerned about security like never before in America, and we're going to let Tyson out of his cage so a bunch of lip-smacking promoters and pay-per-view TV networks pull off a \$150 million heist. Not only is it a scuzzy way of making a buck, it's a potential tragedy in the making. Tyson's presence alone is a license to ill, but as we've seen, his fights also tend to lure unsavory creeps who like carrying guns and sometimes pull the trigger. . . . Make the mega-millions, pay Lewis and Tyson their \$17 million apiece and get out of town. Let the suckers assess the damage. . . . It would be nice to think it will be a great prizefight, but chances are, the evening will be remembered for an event much darker. Say, another melee in the ring. Or maybe a riot outside the arena, a 20,000-seat riverfront building called the Pyramid - as in Pyramid scam - which heretofore has hosted nothing wilder than Dick Versace's hair. Know going in that absolutely anything can happen, including Elvis showing up to sing the national anthem, although Jailhouse Rock would better fit the mood.

There's more. Like what USA Today columnist Mike Lopresti had to offer:

OK, maybe it's an adjustment thinking of Memphis as center of the sports universe. Usually, it means Tulane or Air Force winning the Liberty Bowl . . . Someone called this fight Memphis's Super Bowl. Indeed, the sky's the limit when a city is willing to move heaven and Earth - not to mention several stacks of cash - to put Mike Tyson back in gainful employment. . . . Memphis hit the jackpot by hosting an event that comes with a surcharge for past outrages. Blood money. But it still spends.

And on and on they go. One after another. Everybody has a snide remark - including Sacramento's Mark Kreidler:

After being rejected by Nevada as a staging ground, Tyson's side appealed for fight licenses in such locales as California, Texas, Georgia and Washington, D.C., before finding a stone sucker - excuse me, a motivated civic partner in Tennessee.

Boy was Willie Herenton right when he said not everybody is going to like this move.

## Discussion

1. Do you think the opinions of these columnists are shared by others around the country?
2. To the extent that they are shared, what long term or broader implications might this fight have on the image of Memphis? Why might it matter?

## County's school board criticizes city on title fight

**By Katherine Cromer**  
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**March 29, 2002**

The Shelby County School Board took a stance Thursday against the city's involvement in the June 8 Mike Tyson-Lennox Lewis boxing match. The board voted unanimously to allow Supt. Bobby G. Webb to draft a resolution voicing "strong disagreement as a matter of principle," said Board Chairman David Pickler. "And principle should always come before profit."

The resolution against the fight at The Pyramid came at the urging of board member Joe Clayton, who requested that the issue be put on Thursday's meeting agenda. Tyson's troubled past includes a rape conviction and an incident in which he bit off part of boxer Evander Holyfield's ear in a 1997 fight.

"One of our responsibilities is to provide a safe school in a safe environment for the young people of Shelby County," Clayton said. "When the leadership of our community brings into their environment a convicted rapist and glorifies this boxing match . . . this is sending mixed messages to our young people who we tell character counts." Clayton continued, "There will be a winner and a loser in the ring. There will be only losers outside of the ring and many of those will be the young people of Shelby County."

To school board members, Tyson's presence and promotion in Memphis is a threat to the children of the school system. "We don't have to glorify someone that virtually stands for everything this school board stands against," Pickler said. "This resolution is against the promotion of Tyson as a sports hero for our children." Board member Wyatt Bunker said, "This is not our opposition to the sport of boxing. It's our opposition to one of the athletes."

## Other developments:

- **Tyson's application:** Tyson acknowledged his criminal record on his Tennessee boxing license application, detailing his rape conviction and six-year prison sentence. The Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance handles all boxing licenses. Department spokesman Marilyn Elam said license applicants are expected to be truthful. "Having been convicted of a felony does not automatically disqualify you from a boxing license," Elam said.
- **No fights before the fight:** The British Broadcasting Corp. Web site reported that Jose Sulaiman, president of the World Boxing Council, has asked promoters of each fighter to not put them in a situation that result in another prefight brawl. Lewis and Tyson tangled in a New York press conference in January, and that canceled their scheduled fight in Las Vegas. "I will be asking for composure, gentlemanship and respect," Sulaiman said. "We will forbid physical aggressiveness and there will be a big fine for those who break that even before the fight. There must be a code of ethics in the future."
- **Training update:** Tyson trainer Stacey McKinley told the BBC Web site that Tyson will arrive in Hawaii this week to resume training. Also, one of Lewis's sparring partners is expected to be British heavyweight Michael Spott, 27, who unsuccessfully challenged Danny Williams for the British heavyweight title in February. Spott said he's fighting an undetermined opponent on the Lewis-Tyson undercard.

## Discussion

1. What effects might this fight have on some kids on the local, regional, and national level?
2. What message does the school board think this sends? Do you agree?
3. What is funny about Jose Sulaiman's comments?

## Prize Fight locks in \$12.5 million fee

By Gary Parrish  
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March 30, 2002

With the \$12.5 million site fee secured, Nashville-based Prize Fight Boxing will be involved in the promotion of the June 8 Lennox Lewis-Mike Tyson heavyweight title bout at The Pyramid. Prize Fight's Mike Lampley said Friday that his West Tennessee investor group has received a letter of credit from a bank he declined to disclose. He added there may also be some "actual cash deposits" but "either way, it's done."

Tyson adviser Shelly Finkel confirmed Friday that the site fee issues are resolved and that Prize Fight would be the co-promoter with Main Events, which promotes Lewis. In confirming the co-promotion, Finkel also praised Prize Fight's Brian Young for making the fight possible in Memphis. "There have been some rumors that some other people had something to do with it, but the reason we are coming there is because Brian Young pursued it," Finkel said. "No one else." Said Young: "We want to make sure we do our part and that it's a first-class event. . . . I think this will put Memphis on center stage."

As far as what role the Tunica casinos will play in the fight, Finkel said nothing has been decided on where the boxers' camps will be. "That'll be (decided) in a week or so when I come to town," said Finkel, who added he will arrive in Memphis the week of April 7.

The fight was announced for Memphis on Monday, but Prize Fight's role was not set because First Tennessee Bank declined March 21 to issue a letter of credit. Lampley wouldn't name the bank that has issued a letter of credit because "they may not want that released to the press."

## Discussion

1. Dwight L. Moody said, "Integrity is what you do in the dark when no one can see you." Do you agree or disagree?
2. A common method of determining whether or not something is ethical is to ask these questions:
  - a. How will this hold up under public discussion?
  - b. Would you be willing to have your action posted in a headline?
  - c. What would your mother say if she knew what you did?
3. What does the fact that the bank that issued the letter of credit for the fight say about their integrity?

## Bout's suite seats are tough ticket

By David Williams

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April 7, 2002

They call boxing the Sweet Science. But for the companies holding some of the most sought seats for the June 8 Lennox Lewis-Mike Tyson heavyweight title fight at The Pyramid, it's become the Suite Science. That is, how do suite-holders - whose leases provide them with 18 tickets and four parking passes for each event, at no extra cost - divide those choice seats among the scores of company executives, clients and others who covet them?

"We have been bombarded," said Reggie Barnes, managing director at the Morgan Keegan & Co. investment firm. "This is by far the largest amount of interest I've ever seen. . . . We have well over 100 requests." Jack Peck, vice president/general manager for Clear Channel Television's Memphis's stations, said, "People are coming out of the woodwork, asking if they can get a seat."

The Pyramid has 28 suites, 19 of which are leased - mostly by corporations, at annual costs of \$30,000 to \$65,000 - for University of Memphis basketball games and other non-Grizzlies events.

Also, the city, county and U of M each have a suite. Two more suites are set aside for handicapped seating. Of the four remaining suites, Prize Fight Boxing, a Nashville-based promoter of the bout, controls two for the fight and The Pyramid controls the other two, which building general manager Alan Freeman said could be used for VIP seating.

Corporations - whose leases prohibit them from sub-leasing their suites for an event - generally use the suites to entertain customers or would-be customers. They're also allowed to buy an additional six standing-room tickets, at a price that hasn't been set. That's a total of 24 tickets, which may be more than enough to meet the demand when Dragon Tales Live! plays the arena later this month.

But for the so-called "Super Bowl of boxing"? How does a company decide who to invite? "I haven't figured that out yet," said Greg Anderson, advertising director at The Commercial Appeal. Anderson said the newspaper had received 34 requests as of mid-week. "I can't say I've ever had 34 this far in advance of the event," he said.

This drama seems to be playing out in corporate offices across the city - with at least one notable, if not surprising, exception. The First Tennessee Bank suite will be empty on the night of the biggest sporting event in city history. "This probably won't surprise you," said Terry Lee, First Tennessee's senior vice president of corporate communications. "It's based on our basic reaction to being involved with this fight in any way, financial or otherwise."

First Tennessee refused to issue a letter of credit for Prize Fight Boxing's west Tennessee investor group. The letter of credit was for a site fee that would give Prize Fight the right to be a promoter of the bout. Prize Fight officials - who later said they had secured a letter of credit from another, unnamed bank - said First Tennessee cited a "moral issue," apparently related to Tyson, the sport's most controversial figure for his 1992 rape conviction, the '97 ear-biting of boxer Evander Holyfield and other incidents.

First Tennessee initially declined comment on the matter, but chairman and chief executive officer Ralph Horn, in a guest column in The Commercial Appeal, wrote that the bank declined to issue the letter of credit for "a number of reasons, including serious concerns about potential damage to our reputation by being associated with this fight." Lee said it would be hypocritical to some to entertain clients in the suite, based on the bank's public stance on the fight.

The First Tennessee suite aside, space will be a precious commodity on fight night. The bout is expected to draw more than 20,000 fans, despite the cheapest available ticket costing \$400 and the best seats fetching \$2,000. "I want to commend Ralph Horn for refusing to finance that fight," said James Vining, president and CEO of the Vining Sparks IBG investment firm. "I hope that some good comes to First Tennessee because of his refusal."

The Vining Sparks suite will be full on fight night - full of out-of-town clients - but Vining won't be there. "Personally, I don't think Tyson should have been licensed to fight in the state of Tennessee," Vining said. "I'm not going. . . . I would like to lock the box down and say my box will be dark, but realistically that's not what I'm going to do. "My decision's a little different than Ralph's. If he finances it, he's part of bringing it to Memphis. I want no part of bringing it to Memphis. But now that it's coming and we do have customers interested in seeing the fight . . . our box is going to be full of out-of-town

people." Vining said the fight has drawn "immense" interest from his mostly out-of-town clientele. For him, the dilemma posed by the Suite Science is easily solved: "We will be inviting our best customers."

At Morgan Keegan, Barnes said, "We're going to have to do some sort of a lottery. "I guess we're going to have what I'd call the highest process of elimination or pecking order." Barnes, who oversees the company suite, said he's "sort of torn" on attending the fight. "I've never been to a championship fight," said Barnes, a sports fan who has helped bring such events as the Southeastern Conference basketball tournament to The Pyramid. "That's somewhat the intrigue." But he added, "I'm not a Tyson fan."

Clear Channel's Peck said he's "not a huge fight fan," and doesn't necessarily want to see the fight in person. But he knows plenty of people do. "I had several people call me the day the fight was announced and told me to make sure I hold two tickets for them," Peck said. "I said I'd do the best I can, but don't count on them."

That's the reality of the Suite Science. It's about connections. It's about clout. It's about unlimited interest for a limited number of seats. You probably have to be a corporate titan of the highest order to get a suite seat. Or a king, perhaps. "I'll probably," Peck said, "hold two for sure for Elvis."

## Discussion

1. Describe, compare and contrast the values expressed by First Tennessee, Vining Sparks IBG, and Morgan Keegan.
2. At the end of the day, when the fight is over, one must reflect back on one's actions. What statement does each of these three's actions make about themselves?
3. With respect to right and wrong, it has been said, "To know and not to do is not to know." Do you agree or disagree?

## DeSoto books Ali's daughter

By John Gaskill

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April 7, 2002

DeSoto Civic Center officials confirmed Saturday that Laila Ali, daughter of boxing legend Muhammad Ali, will fight in the facility on the eve of the June 8 Lennox Lewis-Mike Tyson heavyweight title match in Memphis. The announcement marks one of the first tangible benefits reaped by DeSoto County from the Lewis-Tyson fight, which is expected to draw fight fans from around the globe.

"We all know the Tyson-Lewis fight is going to be big," promoter Johnny 'Yahya' McClain, Ali's husband and manager, said during the announcement at the Civic Center. "I just wanted to show the world that chivalry is not dead. So of course, ladies first." Ali's opponent has not been confirmed, but the spot has been offered to several boxers, McClain said. Topping the list is Freda Foreman, daughter of boxer George Foreman. Offers have also been made to Christine Robinson and Kendra Lenhart, the current WIBF 168-pound champ, McClain said.

Ticket prices for the event, which should accommodate 8,000-9,000 spectators, have not yet been determined, civic center officials said.

McClain said he wasn't sure whether Ali's famous father would attend his daughter's fight, but said the elder Ali had been invited to the Memphis event. "If he's coming to Tyson, he's probably going to be here," he said.

Ali's match will be the main event on a card of at least six fights. Organizers are in negotiations with several major networks for television rights, and McClain said it could be seen by as many as 30 million viewers. "Nothing is concrete, but it will be shown," he said.

Southaven Mayor Greg Davis, Memphis Mayor Willie Herenton and civic center officials attended the afternoon press conference. "When the announcement was made that Memphis would host the other fight, we hoped Southaven would be able to benefit," Davis said. "I'd like to say to Mayor Herenton, we're going to steal your thunder before you have a chance to get it."

## Discussion

1. Is there anything about this story that bothers you?
2. If 50 million people would watch two people fight to the death on HBO, should it be televised? How do you decide where to draw the line?

## **Dancer, boyfriend say Tyson assaulted them**

**By The Associated Press**  
**April 8, 2002**

PHOENIX - Police are reviewing claims by an exotic dancer and her boyfriend that Mike Tyson assaulted them during an early morning confrontation at a strip club Sunday. Tyson, who served three years in an Indiana prison on a rape conviction in 1992, is scheduled to begin training next week for his June 8 fight at The Pyramid with heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis.

Tyson's lawyer said the former boxing champion was at the club early Sunday, but left before there was any confrontation. A brief police statement said there were "no visible injuries to either victim" and that Tyson had left the Hillier Club by the time officers arrived shortly before 1 a.m. The alleged victims were identified as a 25-year-old dancer at the club and her 23-year-old boyfriend.

Tyson's attorney, Darrow Soll, called the allegations "patently false" and said several witnesses confirmed Tyson never struck anyone. A topless dancer claimed in May 2000 that Tyson was abusive to her at a Las Vegas strip club, but police later said there was nothing to the allegations.

## **Police put up guard for night of heavyweights**

**Security task like 'Olympics,' chief says; federal, state agencies join in**

**By Marc Perrusquia**  
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**April 11, 2002**

When Mike Tyson and Lennox Lewis go toe to toe at The Pyramid for the world heavyweight boxing title, a dynamic, publicly funded security force will be watching the fighters' backs. "We're going to treat it as though it's the Olympics to Memphis, Tenn.," said police Director Walter Crews, who's overseeing the gargantuan task of keeping the peace amid the chaos of a title fight. Memphis has never seen anything like it.

In addition to the crowds and traffic, police anticipate a variety of challenges, from the rogue following that often encircles pro boxing to the post-Sept. 11 complexities of staging a major sporting event. Already, police planners are meeting several times a week to prepare for the June 8 fight, coordinating plans with 10 or more local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

The responsibility has Crews nearly floored. "The magnitude of what this means to these fighters and what it means to the boxing world sets the stage for a group or an individual to take advantage of the situation with some sort of violent display. And we have to guard against that," Crews said. "This is the world heavyweight - the world heavyweight, not the United States but the world heavyweight championship - and it will get the attention of the entire world."

Police still have no estimates on manpower or costs needed for the undertaking. One potentially costly detail emerging from the talks is a Memphis Police Department plan to offer dignitary protection, if requested, to the fighters, as well as an undetermined number of political figures expected to attend the match. Dignitary protection is the ring of security the department offers to national politicians, foreign ambassadors and other VIPs who visit Memphis. Comprising specially trained uniformed and plainclothes officers, dignitary protection units at times resemble the Secret Service units that surround the President at public appearances.

Crews said a dozen or more high-profile political figures are expected for the fight, and may be in need of protection. He declined to name them, saying details haven't been confirmed. Police may provide dignitary protection to other celebrities upon special request or if there's an "imminent threat," Crews said.

Calling the security plans a work in progress, Crews conceded the effort could get costly depending on the fighters' needs and schedules. Tyson and Lewis have not announced their pre-fight schedules, and it's not yet known if they'll spend several days or weeks in the area. If the fighters train at Tunica casino sites, as expected, Crews said he's prepared to dispatch dignitary protection units there, though he doesn't expect it because the thinly manned Tunica Sheriff's Office can tap resources from Mississippi agencies first. Tunica Sheriff Jerry Ellington did not respond Wednesday to messages left at his home and office.

Memphis police have more than 50 officers trained in dignitary protection. Though dignitary protection often involves around-the-clock watch, costs can be kept down by scheduling officers during their normal work hours to avoid overtime. Patrolmen assigned to dignitary protection earn about \$20 an hour. Over three shifts, that's \$480 a day. Crews declined to say how many officers might serve on a given dignitary protection unit, but said such details could involve one to three or more men depending on need. Demand for police protection of the fighters could be further limited depending on the security they bring with them, Crews said.

Regardless of how some people view Tyson, a convicted rapist who's faced repeated assault allegations, police have an obligation to protect him and others connected to the fight, Crews said. "We can't let the crowd run over him. We can't let the crowd run over Mr. Lewis either. And they would if they didn't see the police presence there. They have adamant fans that probably worship the ground they walk on."

Police in Las Vegas are well versed in Tyson's antics and disturbances associated with his appearances there. Rapper Tupac Shakur was gunned down, and later died of his wounds, after attending a Tyson fight at Las Vegas's MGM Grand Hotel in 1996. A year later, Tyson bit off a chunk of Evander Holyfield's ear during a fight at the MGM and was disqualified, stirring a wild fracas. "With Mike Tyson, it's no surprise, he's going to attract a certain kind of crowd," said Sgt. Linda Atkinson of the Las Vegas Police Department's special events unit.

Police there typically supplement arena security for boxing matches, providing 20 or more patrolmen for interior security at big fights. Police also may provide security for the ring walk, the weigh-ins and pre-fight press conferences depending on how "adversarial" the fighters are, Atkinson said. During big matches, Las Vegas police also place officers at each of the four ring corners. "That's so if a bad decision comes down, if they stop the fight and somebody doesn't agree with it, we're right there," Atkinson said.

Outside the arena, Las Vegas police generally don't provide dignitary protection to the fighters, who tend to have large entourages and their own bodyguards, she said. In Memphis, police have opened an office at The Pyramid as their plans take shape.

Crews said he's received pointers from police in Salt Lake City, host of the recent winter Olympics. Crews said fans attending the Tyson-Lewis match can expect to pass through metal detectors, but police are releasing few other details. Police security planners speak about four times a day and are holding three or four meetings a week, said Deputy Chief Charles Cook. Agencies assisting the police department include the FBI, the federal Secret Service, the Shelby County Sheriff's Office, other sheriff's departments "outside the city of Memphis" and the Tennessee and Mississippi highway patrols.

"We really want this to be a good, safe environment," Cook said. "And we can't give all the secrets away. That's just the hard-core part of real security: You don't let everybody know what all your plans are."

## Discussion

1. With increased risk comes the potential for greater returns—that's a central premise of finance and investments. In turn, greater risk brings with it the possibility of greater loss. What's the worst thing that could happen at the Melee in Memphis event? What's the best thing?
2. What does this story teach you about preparation and planning major sporting events?