

INTERNATIONAL BOXING FEDERATION



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Springfield, NJ – May 14, 2026 – On April 16, 2026, the International Boxing Federation (IBF) received a letter from John Hornewer on behalf of IBF/WBA/WBC Unified Heavyweight Champion Oleksandr Usyk requesting that the IBF permit Usyk to participate in an unsanctioned contest against Rico Verhoeven on May 23, 2026, in Giza, Egypt.

Pursuant to IBF Rule 5.H., “An unsanctioned contest is a fight which the IBF has not formally approved for sanction or where sanction has been formally withdrawn. If a Champion participates in an unsanctioned contest within his prescribed weight limit, the title will be declared vacant whether the Champion wins or loses the bout.”

The World Boxing Council (WBC) has sanctioned the Usyk vs. Verhoeven bout and indicated that it will enforce its mandatory bout next. Based on the rotation system, the World Boxing Association (WBA) mandatory bout would follow the WBC mandatory. Accordingly, the IBF determined that there are no affected boxers, as the IBF acknowledges the rotation system among the IBF, WBA, WBC, and WBO.

On April 29, 2026, the IBF Board of Directors convened by video conference and determined that Usyk’s exception request should be granted, subject to the following conditions:

1. If Usyk loses on May 23, 2026, the IBF Heavyweight title will be declared vacant immediately.
2. If Usyk wins on May 23, 2026, the IBF will acknowledge the WBC’s position in the rotation and order the IBF mandatory bout for one hundred eighty (180) days thereafter.
3. If the WBA grants a special permit, the IBF will acknowledge the WBA’s position in the rotation and order the IBF mandatory bout for one hundred eighty (180) days thereafter.
4. The IBF reserves the right to amend the mandatory date in the event of substantial delays in the rotation.

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