

# INTERNATIONAL BOXING FEDERATION



Daryl J. Peoples, President

George Martinez, Championships Chairman

Ben Keilty, Ratings Chairman

## OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

899 Mountain Ave., Suite 2E ■ Springfield, NJ 07081

Phone: 973-564-8046

[www.ibf-usba-boxing.com](http://www.ibf-usba-boxing.com)

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***Springfield, NJ – March 10, 2026*** – The International Boxing Federation (IBF) issues this statement to address and correct inaccurate information that has been circulated publicly over the weekend regarding its sanction of the Jai Opeteia vs. Brandon Glanton bout for the optional defense of the IBF Cruiserweight title on March 8, 2026.

As previously noted in its press release issued on March 6, the IBF had no communication with any direct representative of Zuffa Boxing regarding sanction of the Opeteia vs. Glanton bout. This remained the case until after March 6, when the sanction for the bout was withdrawn. On February 11, the IBF initiated discussions with Mick Francis, head of Tasman Fighters, Opeteia's promoter of record with the IBF, when IBF President Daryl Peoples sent him a letter via email after seeing announcements on social media for the scheduled contest. The letter reminded Francis of IBF Rule 5, which governs champions and unification bouts. Later that day Francis submitted an application requesting sanction for the optional defense of the IBF Cruiserweight title. The IBF denied sanction of the bout.

Discussions were then continued with a representative retained by Opeteia, and Sean Gibbons of Manny Pacquiao Promotions and Knucklehead Boxing serving as a mediator. Tasman Fighters and Francis were no longer involved in these discussions. The IBF has maintained a long-standing professional relationship with Gibbons. Peoples received verbal assurances from Gibbons that the IBF title would be the championship contested on March 8, and that the Zuffa belt would only be awarded as a token of recognition at the end of the bout. A subsequent letter to Peoples by the representative retained by Opeteia also confirmed that the Zuffa belt would be characterized as a "trophy or token of recognition."

Gibbons submitted another bout application for the contest on March 3 listing Manny Pacquiao Promotions as the promoter of the bout. After receiving the fully executed bout contracts from Gibbons, the IBF formally sanctioned the Opeteia vs. Glanton bout on March 5. Payment for sanction fees, which totaled \$73,000.00, was sent to the IBF via wire transfer from Knucklehead Boxing's bank account and received by the IBF on March 6. The IBF withdrew sanction of the bout at 8:22 PM EST on March 6 via email to Gibbons following the prefight press conference that took place shortly beforehand. At 1:22 PM EST on March 7 a wire transfer was processed from the IBF back to Knucklehead Boxing's bank account returning the \$73,000.00 in sanction fees. Immediately afterward, an email was sent to Gibbons including the wire transfer receipt advising that the funds had been returned. Gibbons acknowledged receipt of the email at 2:46 PM EST.

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In the email to Gibbons withdrawing sanction for the bout, Peoples addressed the assurances Gibbons had provided and the letter he had received which led to the IBF sanctioning the bout. Peoples did not express concern over the IBF belt's placement during the press conference in the email. In fact, the words "belt" and "placement" were not included in the email at all, contrary to what certain members of the boxing media have suggested in reports stating that they were granted access to the email sent by Peoples.

Furthermore, the IBF did not withdraw sanction and then go silent, nor were Peoples and the supervisor for the bout unreachable. The supervisor remained onsite in Las Vegas until early the next morning. On the morning of March 7, Peoples received a phone call from a representative of TKO Boxing and asked that any further communication with the IBF be sent by email. The TKO Boxing representative did not follow up by email.

Prior to the supervisor's departure to Las Vegas, he was contacted by Gibbons. Gibbons offered to reimburse the supervisor for airport transfers, and when the supervisor arrived in Las Vegas, Gibbons offered him a per diem of \$100, which the supervisor accepted.

The IBF categorically rejects any suggestion or claim that it intentionally withdrew sanction to cause harm. The IBF granted sanction of the Opeteia vs. Glanton bout in good faith expecting that what was assured is what would transpire. The press conference held at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, Nevada, on March 6 made it very clear that the inaugural Zuffa World Cruiserweight championship would be contested on March 8. The IBF, as previously stated on March 6, reserves the right to sanction title bouts alongside other sanctioning bodies that comply with the same regulations followed by the IBF, and reserves the right to sanction title bouts alongside other entities that stage championships contests.

The status of the IBF Cruiserweight Title remains in deliberation. Jai Opeteia made comments during the post-fight press conference that have led the organization's leadership to question whether he was made completely and fully aware by his advisors of the decisions he needed to make when committing to the bout against Brandon Glanton. The organization intends to look further into this matter.

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Contact: Jeanette Salazar  
Public Relations Director/IBF  
[jsalazar@ibfboxing.com](mailto:jsalazar@ibfboxing.com)