

Strawberry's future with NY Yankees uncertain

NEW YORK (AP) — Now that Darryl Strawberry will be eligible to return to baseball for the final 7 1/2 weeks of the season, the New York Yankees must figure out if they have a place for him.



DARRYL STRAWBERRY

"Whether we come together again remains to be seen," Yankees manager Joe Torre said Friday after commissioner Bud Selig decided the suspension will run through Aug. 11.

"We're not going to know anything until he's ready and we see what our situation is," said Torre.

Strawberry's suspension will total 120 days, retroactive to his April 14 arrest in Tampa, Fla. Selig suspended Strawberry indefinitely on April 24.

"I'm just happy there may be a light at the end of the tunnel for Darryl," Torre said.

The 37-year-old Strawberry, who has repeatedly found himself in alcohol, drug and tax trouble since 1987, could return slightly sooner, with Selig saying he will review the situation July 22 because of

"mitigating health factors." He did not elaborate.

"A lot of people had second, third chances. Why not him?" Yankees designated hitter Chili Davis said. "Steve Howe had 29,000 chances."

Because of his ailing left knee, Strawberry will need several weeks in the minor leagues to rehabilitate, meaning the best-case scenario is probably a return to the majors sometime around Sept. 1, when active rosters expand from 25 to 40.

Strawberry, who served a 90-day suspension in 1995 after testing positive for

cocaine, was slated to be a left-field candidate before his arrest. He hit .247 with 24 homers and 57 RBIs last year, his best season since 1991.

When the Yankees broke camp before the start of the season, he remained at their Tampa training complex because he had not yet recovered from colon cancer surgery last fall, an illness that caused him to miss the postseason.

Some argued that chemotherapy might have caused a depression that led to a drug relapse.

Others in baseball wanted Strawberry suspended for the entire season.

"I think it's a good decision," Yankees pitcher David Cone, Strawberry's closest friend on the team, said in the clubhouse after the decision was announced. "If he walks through that door, I'll be the first one to shake his hand."

Torre, who last spoke with Strawberry 3-4 weeks ago, said it was too early to assess Strawberry's condition.

"I don't know what he's been doing," Torre said.

Lewis-Holyfield rematch closer to reality

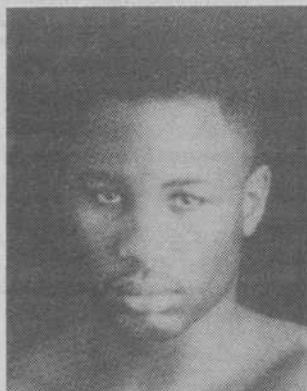
NEW YORK (AP) - Lennox Lewis was in New York on Saturday night to scout a possible opponent, but he said his real mission was to push for a rematch with Evander Holyfield.

And that fight appeared closer to being made following negotiating sessions last week.

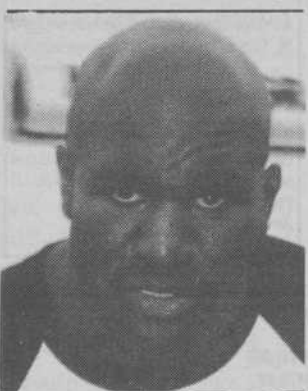
Time Warner, operator of HBO and pay-per-view TVKO, had wanted Don King to sign an agreement that would allow them to order him to step aside as fight promoter should he be indicted in connection with the controversial fight that ended in a draw March 13.

Lou DiBella, senior vice president of HBO Sports, said Saturday night that HBO was no longer insisting on King signing such an agreement and that any action taken to prevent King from promoting it would have to be taken by a government agency.

Seth Abraham, president of Time Warner sports, said a fight could happen if King agrees to pay Holyfield's purse and all the undercard purses while Time Warner will pay Lewis. Each fighter would be guaranteed \$15 million for the Nov. 13 fight in Las Vegas.



LENNOX LEWIS



EVANDER HOLYFIELD

"We're a lot more optimistic today than we were Thursday or Friday," Abraham said.

There are still stumbling blocks, however. Panos Eliades, Lewis' British

promoter, said he still has a matter to work out with King. Eliades also said, "We need it (an agreement) done in the next four weeks because Lewis wants to fight this year."

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Don King

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Newspaper Publishers Association, an organization of black media heads, during their annual convention, King reminded delegates that Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States, warned his countrymen to "Never Trust the Government."

While King still professes an undying love for America, he said he was surprised and shocked by the FBI's unnecessary and unwarranted raid on his headquarters.

Most shocking was the trifling tactics the FBI used to try and patch together a case on him, efforts like asking Ms. Carolyn Kelly, an executive with First Class Championship Development Center in Newark, N.J., "have you ever been to bed with Don King?"

Kelly said the question was posed by FBI agent Gerald S. Richards when he served her with a subpoena. King said the question was gross, unprofessional and represented the lowest level of depravity.

"Can you imagine that?" King asked. "When the FBI, the most respected law enforcement and investigative branch in the land, resorts to back-alley tactics like this, we are all in trouble."

"That question has no basis in this investigation, however unfortunate and unnecessary this investigation may be. When it comes to Don King, it always seems that the perpetrators go as low as they can get."

King said he believes that when the dust clears, when the innuendo ends, and when his detractors finish making slips and pratfalls, he will emerge again with his dignity intact.

"I am not guilty of any of the claims and allegations, leveled in the Post," he commented. "Truth crushed to the earth will inevitably rise again."

A number of notable national civil rights leaders are rallying to King's side, including the Rev. Al Sharpton, who met with King last week while he was in New York.

Sharpton, head of the National Action Network, said he is disturbed at the numerous attempts to discredit King and to make small King's contributions to boxing, to overlook his charitable contributions in the millions and to disregard his support of worthy causes regardless of race.

Sharpton raised a number of questions about the latest rationale and the continued harassment of King. Sharpton was also highly critical of Newfield, whom he called a "certified King hater."

"Don has done more for boxing than anyone else," stated Sharpton.

In his usual fiery posture, Sharpton said he plans to call for a show of national unity in support of King.

"We're demanding justice, not mercy," he declared.

Sharpton is also working to put together a coalition of the nation's leading black ministers and concerned citizens to meet with U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno to address the issue of fairness for people of color in the United States.

He said the recent raid on King's headquarters — plus the growing number of racial profiling cases in cities across the country — represent what he calls a "misuse and abuse of power that cannot be tolerated in a country where freedom and justice are supposed to be taken as a matter of course."

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