

# Judge's ruling stuns Trenton boxer

By JIM DAVIS

Sports Editor

Trenton light heavyweight boxer Britton Thomas, a rising star in the sport with a 10-1 record with nine knockouts, yesterday lost his license to box until he pays child support arrears to the mother of twin girls born in 1997.

Judge Gerald Council issued the order to suspend the license until Thomas pays nearly \$4,000 in back support.

Thomas, whose fights have aired on ESPN and HBO, fights out of the

## Thomas loses his license for failure to pay child support

Mar-Teri Gym in Trenton and is managed by Tom Hockey of Newark.

"We understand that Tiger Thomas has a fight schedule for this month in Pennsylvania, but the loss of his license in New Jersey most likely means that fight will have to be canceled or postponed," said Brian Paul, a family law attorney representing Szaferman Lakins, which represents the twins' mother.

"Federal law requires all states to give full faith and credit to child

support orders issued in other states, so it is unlikely that another state will grant him a license until he pays up."

Without a chance to fight, Mar-Teri Gym owner and Thomas assistant trainer, Mugsy Episcopo, said that might present a problem.

"There are a million cases like this and they don't get their license revoked," said Episcopo. "This is a joke. She's been getting a third of his purses and he's been paying support."

"Why would you take a guy's license away from him? How's that going to help him pay? He's finally gotten to the point in his career where he can make a little money from a TV fight and this? There's no justice."

The New Jersey Child Support Improvement Act was amended in 1998 to include all licenses and certificates issued by the state, including beauticians, architects, recreational and sporting licenses.

"Boxing is a privilege in New Jersey, not a right," said Paul. "It's like the practice of law, teaching or driving a car. If you don't meet your social and moral obligations to pay child support, that privilege will be taken away."

The twins' mother, Margaret Greco of Trenton, said that Thomas has never exercised his visitation rights and has rarely made child support payments.

Thomas was last scheduled to fight April 28 but his opponent became ill and the fight was canceled.

# Child support, not ring foe, kayos a boxer

## Jersey fighter is first to have his license lifted

By Kathy Barrett Carter  
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

Boxer Britton "Tiger" Thomas, an up-and-coming light heavyweight, is making history, but not for his knockouts in the ring.

Yesterday, Thomas, 23, who grew up in Newark, became the first boxer in the state, and perhaps the nation, to have his boxing license suspended for failing to pay \$4,000 in back child support for his 2-year-old twin daughters, Mariah and Marissa Greco.

Under New Jersey's tough child support laws, judges can suspend professional licenses when a parent fails to pay child support.

Rhonda Utley, a spokeswoman for the state boxing commission, confirmed it had received the court order and will comply with it. She said it was the first time a boxer's license had been suspended in New Jersey for non-payment of child support.

"I think it's a good law. It really should be enforced," said the mother of the twins, Margaret Greco, a 31-year-old legal secretary with the Attorney General's Office who lives in Trenton.

"I am not angry," said Greco. But she said it is difficult and expensive

raising children as a single parent and she believes Thomas has an obligation to contribute

Brian Paul, the Princeton lawyer who represented Greco, said, "I think it's great the Legislature realized one way to get people to pay child support is to say they are not entitled to use their privileges until they meet their obligations."

Boxing is a privilege, not a right, Paul said.

"In this particular case the judge gave him many chances to comply," said Paul, who said the judge put Thomas on a payment plan but Thomas did not make the \$30 a week child support payments — \$65 for current support and the remainder to cover past due payments.

But Gregory Stagliano, the Trenton lawyer representing Thomas, said his client has been living up to his obligation.

"Since I became involved two or three months ago, he has been in substantial compliance with all of his child support obligations," Stagliano said. "He is doing the best he can."

Depriving a boxer of the license he needs to make a living does not make sense, in this case, Stagliano said. This is not a situation in which

Thomas has totally ignored his obligation, he said.

"In the grand scheme of things it is probably a good provision and a good law," said Stagliano, but common sense has to be applied.

Two years ago, the Legislature passed a law allowing judges to suspend professional licenses for failure to pay child support. Since then 12 professional licenses have been suspended.

Among those to lose a profes-

sional license so far are a lawyer, an architect, a psychiatrist, a taxi cab driver and a pizza store operator, according to Robert Seidenstein, a spokesman for the Administrative Office of the Courts, the state agency that oversees child support enforcement.

Not many licenses have been suspended because usually the threat of suspension is enough to get a delinquent parent to pay up, Seidenstein said.

law in court. The Attorney General's office also refused to provide Chasin with continued legal representation. At the point she hired a private counsel who was able to settle the case before it went to trial.

Lloyd agreed to drop the lawsuit after the university decided to give him an A with an explanation that it had been administratively awarded, meaning it was not bestowed by his teacher.

Once the legal battle ended, Chasin, with the help of the union, sued for the legal fees she had incurred, saying the state had a duty to defend her in a lawsuit in which she


sor asserting so defensible a position and motivated by a respect for academic freedom is disappointing indeed," Stein said.

Rita Mahley, a spokeswoman for the Attorney General's Office, said, "We're pleased with the decision. We believe it's appropriate."

Paul Schachter, the lawyer for Chasin, said, "The basic position we argued, and we think it's sound, is a faculty member who acts in good faith and is sued by a student has a right to be defended and indemnified by the state at a state college or university."

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