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Boxer Stevie Johnston leaves Denver District Court with his wife, Vivian, Monday afternoon. He was charged with contempt of court for not

paying child support. Prosecutors wanted him to serve 18 months in jail, but instead he promised to turn over the purse from his next fight.

Boxer avoids jail by promising next purse

Johnston to give cash from bout to mothers of four of his children

By John C. Ensslin
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

The purse from boxer Stevie Johnston's next fight will go to the three mothers of four of his children for back child support.

In turn, the 30-year-old Johnston, an ex-lightweight champion of the World Boxing Council, will avoid a return to jail, defense attorney Sharon Liko said Monday after a daylong contempt of court hearing.

Johnston owes \$55,000 in payments for the four children, ranging in age from 7 to 11.

Johnston has a bout tentatively scheduled for late September, Liko said. He could gross about \$25,000, and net \$12,500 after expenses, Liko said. But Johnston needs that money to pay his child support, she said.

"You can't get blood from a turnip," Liko said.

Johnston tried to borrow from investors and sell assets in order to meet his court-ordered payments, but has been unable to raise the money, she said.

During the closed-door hearing in Denver District Court, prosecutors from the Denver City Attorney's Office asked that Johnson serve 18 months in jail, Liko said.

"That would've ruined his career," she said. "His manager thinks he has a couple of years left, but he hasn't had a big fight since April 20 and he doesn't have any other way of making money."

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Sharon Liko, attorney for Stevie Johnston, in response to prosecutors' request that Johnston serve 18 months in jail

Johnston fought his 37th professional bout at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas in April. Earlier that month, he was released from jail after coming up with \$60,000 as a partial payment after falling 18 months behind on child support.

Assistant City Attorney Joe DiGregorio declined comment.

Still unresolved is whether Johnston's child support payments should be reduced because as his boxing winnings decline.

He had been scheduled to fight Steve Quinonez in Baraboo, Wis., in

a bout that would have been broadcast on ESPN2.

However, a lower back injury forced Johnston to cancel that fight.

Liko, who took over as Johnston's lawyer in April, said the hearing will continue Sept. 9 to determine if the order setting child support payments should be vacated.

She contends that the payments are based on gross figures taken from newspaper accounts of Johnston's earlier fights.

His net earnings are far less, she said.