

## STEWARD SCORES FOUR-POINTER AT SENATE HEARING

Written by Charles Jay  
Thursday, 23 May 2002 18:00

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You know, I was a little out of line with regard to Emanuel Steward when I was doing my "pre-game" analysis of Wednesday's boxing hearing before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

I'm still uncomfortable with the situation I've described before regarding amateur boxing, though in all fairness I hold USA Boxing primarily accountable for that, not necessarily Steward. But I'd have to say that I completely missed my assessment with what he might say during the hearing.

Not only was Steward a thoroughly worthwhile contributor to the overall dialogue, but he made what I felt were four of the most important points in the entire proceeding - points we'll be exploring much more in depth as we continue along with "Operation Cleanup".

Here they are:

### \* SOMETIMES PROMOTERS GET SCREWED BY FIGHTERS ALSO

-- It was SO important to point that out. And only someone who has really been exposed to the whole promoter-manager-fighter dynamic would have the insight to recognize it. One theme that has been characteristic in the discussion of reform in boxing has been that the fighter is perpetually the victim - getting hurt, misled, robbed, exploited by the promoter. Sure enough, that happens - it would be foolish to deny it. But it happens the other way around much more than the public has ever been led to believe by any politician. Why have people been misinformed? Well, I would imagine it's just more politically useful for a politician to paint a stereotyped picture of the promoter as the greedy, opportunistic villain and the young and naive - or aging and punched-out - fighter as the victim than to create ambiguity by distributing blame equally. But since it's not done that way, you wind up with the kind of legislation that leaves a big "hole" in terms of its real effectiveness. I think it's important to look at the other side of the problem, in order to get to the heart of the matter. We will.

### \* WE'VE GOT TO TAKE CARE OF THE FANS

-- You know, there's so much talk at these proceedings about how fighters need to be assured of better safety; how fighters need to be protected against "evil" promoters; how they need a pension fund; how commissioners need to be better enabled to carry out their duties with the help of a little Federal "juice". But not many people seem to be addressing what I call the "lost constituency" here - the fans. I know this may be an unpopular statement in the boxing reform "movement", if there indeed is such a thing, but I feel the consideration of the fans may just be more important than anything. Without them, could the business exist? Could any sports-related business? I'm going to repeat something I've said on these pages before - it has been a rare occasion when I have sat down with

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promoters I have worked with, and they have ever given their utmost consideration to  
WHAT THE FANS WANT. It's usually THEIR agenda first, customer satisfaction second.  
And that's one of the reasons boxing is not nearly as popular now as it has been in the  
distant past (yes, that's a statement by Steward that I disagree with).

### \* MANAGERS SHOULD MEET SOME SORT OF QUALIFICATIONS

-- I really don't think this is too much to ask. After all, a manager, if he's doing his job, has a lot of responsibilities regarding the career he's "stewarding", if you pardon the pun. And if the manager ISN'T doing his job, it could be because he doesn't know enough to do the correct and prudent thing. You don't want to prevent guys (or gals) from entering the business out of hand, but you want to make sure they're not dangerously naive, or stupid, when they do. This is a subject we'll definitely spend some more time on.

### \* WE SHOULD BE LOOKING AT WHAT GOES ON IN THESE GYMS

-- No doubt about it. Steward relayed a story about walking into a gym in Las Vegas, where he saw that a trainer had put a heavyweight behemoth in with a 120-pound WOMAN, and the woman was taking a pounding. Steward said it was so frightful that he saw no choice but to intercede, and he very nearly wound up in a fistfight by doing so. "She needs to learn how to take a beating", or words to that effect, were said by the trainer. Uh, huh. Well, a suspension would have been too lenient for a guy like that. Maybe some jail time would have done the trick. We're going to be dealing with this subject in the next couple of days, because this is something I warned the ABC about quite a while ago.

But you want to know the sad part about all of these points? They were made, and then they were just glossed over, if even acknowledged, by Senators McCain and Dorgan. They didn't seem to even want to discuss them. I don't know if they were not "briefed" on them, or if they weren't a part of the overall "agenda". But they could have been a critical part of the discussion, even during the limited time, yet the senators seemed more concerned with discussing Bruce "The Mouse" Strauss going from state to state and getting knocked out week after week - a problem that has more or less been rectified because of the Federal ID system.

But I do thank Emanuel Steward for bringing them up.

And to boot, he took the time to travel from the Pennsylvania training camp of Lennox Lewis, preparing for one of the biggest fights in history, to do it.

As far as I'm told, no one from the D.C. Boxing Commission even bothered to travel across the street to be there.

I guess that tells you a little something, doesn't it?

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