If you think the situation we described in the last chapter is anything new in terms of NABF shenanigans, I'd like to take the liberty of relating a first-hand story to you.

Okay - so I'm sitting in a hotel room at the Two Trees Inn at Foxwoods Casino in Connecticut. The date is March 7, 1994, and I had come with my partner to bring Garing Lane into town for a USA Network main event against former heavyweight champion Larry Holmes. The hotel room belonged to Arthur Pelullo, whose company, Banner Promotions, was promoting the fight.

There are a bunch of us in the room, and we're sitting around, watching television. At some point, Pelullo got up to take a phone call. On the other end of the line was Sam Macias, the chairman of the championship committee for the North American Boxing Federation (NABF).

Arthur talks loud enough that he can be heard, over the television, so I really didn't need to eavesdrop on the conversation. And it didn't take long to ascertain that the subject matter of this discussion was how they could manipulate the ratings so that one of Pelullo's fighters - Mississippi welterweight Donald Stokes - could fight for the vacant NABF 147-pound championship - and do so somewhere on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

At that time, Buddy McGirt, who was listed at #1, was not particularly interested in the NABF title, having been pointed to a WBC welterweight title rematch with Pernell Whitaker, a fight which eventually took place in October of that year.

David Gonzalez, a body-puncher from Texas who was rated #2, was just coming off a loss to former Olympic bronze medalist Kenny Gould on November 16, 1993, so obviously he was set to drop in the ranks.

What neither Pelullo nor Macias were aware of as they were talking was that a couple of months before, I had made a deal with Battle Promotions of Michigan, for a "promotional assignment" on Gould, which essentially meant little more than that I had the right to promote shows with the fighter. But inasmuch as I was pursuing promotional opportunities with a casino in Mississippi, I planned to be putting Gould into action on a regular basis.

Well, Gould was positioned, from what I recall, at #7 in the ratings. He had already beaten the #2 guy, and should, by all rights, have moved up. The #1 contender, McGirt, was not going to be available, so simple arithmetic tells me that Gould has to be right in the mix if a potential vacant title is going to be contested for. And that may have, from my perspective, enabled me to promote such a fight at any casino I had a relationship with.

So naturally, as Pelullo and Macias are talking about putting Stokes - who was rated below Gould - in against certain prospective opponents, ALL of whom were unrated, in the process

completely leapfrogging Gould, who should probably be in the top three, my blood's starting to boil.

And as this conversation continued, things became more and more surreal. Pelullo was saying things like, "Well, why don't we move this guy down a couple of spots, and this guy down a couple of spots, and then we can stick Donald in at #5. And we can move so-and-so out and put so-and-so into the ratings so he can be Donald's opponent".

As they continued to talk about arbitrarily moving Stokes into the top five, in order to necessitate putting him in the title fight, despite not having fought in almost eight months, it got to the point where I just had to speak up.

So I did - loudly enough that I knew Macias had no choice but to hear me on the other end of the phone line. And that the Pequot Indians could hear me on the other end of the reservation.

I howled - how the hell can you possibly bypass Gould so casually? Don't you have to go by some sort of rules? Why hasn't Gould moved up after beating the #2 contender, who would actually be #1 since McGirt won't fight for the title?

Well, I knew Stokes didn't want to fight Kenny Gould. Stokes wouldn't have beaten Kenny Gould. And the NABF title fight wasn't going to do Pelullo any good unless he could promote it, and have control of the champion in the end. He wouldn't have gotten either of those things with me involved (Note: as it turned out, Stokes, after fighting a dull "tuneup" against opponent David Taylor, went on the shelf for two years and never did fight that NABF title bout that was ready to be handed to him - and in the end, I didn't do very much with Gould either).

But my question for Macias - asked through Pelullo - was, is Kenny Gould, who is rated above Stokes, and ready, willing, and able to fight, going to be included in a contest for the vacant title? And if not, why?

Macias' response, as Pelullo relayed it, was that I should have made the NABF aware of the Gould-Gonzalez fight result. And I should have sent the ring record of Gould into their office, as if the results didn't exist UNLESS I sent them in.

To understand the phony, ridiculous nature of that answer, consider that Gould's win was the main event on the November 16, 1993 edition of USA Network's "Tuesday Night Fights", which just happened to be the not only most popular regularly-scheduled boxing show on television, but one of cable TV's highest-rated sports programs. The NABF presumably worked closely with Fight Fax, and in fact its owner, Ralph Citro, sat on the NABF board. And apparently Gould's record was good enough to get him rated by the NABF at the time. Quite obviously, there was no excuse in the world that they wouldn't have had his record in their hands, or have very easy access to it.

But you see - Macias figured he could say anything he wanted to, since no one was looking

over his shoulder.

That is, until now.

As we showed you in Chapter 22, the NABF is still, in substance, getting away with the same kind of nonsense now that they were then - much of it in conjunction with Pelullo.

And I would dearly love for the Association of Boxing Commissions, which, according to the Ali Act, "shall develop and shall approve by a vote of no less than a majority of its member State boxing commissioners, guidelines for objective and consistent written criteria for the ratings of professional boxers", something that is now long overdue, to demonstrate that they're in business for something other than to provide gainful employment for Jack "Death Wish" Kerns.

In fact, I challenge Tim Lueckenhoff, president of the ABC, who aspires for his organization to take a lead when it comes to uniform standards and regulations, to step forward and prove that to me - and anyone who might be reading this - by holding an official inquiry as to how the NABF could possibly manipulate the ratings, with no rhyme or reason, circumventing their own rules, in a way which curiously and consistently appears to benefit the same promoter, over and over and over again - at which time both promoter and sanctioning body would be required to make themselves accountable.

I would suggest the ABC shouldn't be taken even semi-seriously until they're ready to do just that.

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