

WITH THE KENTUCKY COMMISSION, HIS NAME IS MUDD

Written by Charles Jay
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A former athletic commissioner from the state of Kentucky has revealed to us that he was threatened with discipline, and later dismissed, for having the temerity to be forthcoming with reporters in the aftermath of the injuries suffered by ex-heavyweight champ Greg Page in a Kentucky ring last March 9; a tragic incident that was most likely caused by the commission's refusal to insist on adequate medical and safety provisions for the fight, as was required by Federal law.

Ironically, Michael Mudd, the commissioner in question, was not even on hand that evening in Erlanger, Ky., when Page lapsed into a coma following his loss to Dale Crowe. But the ex-fighter, who had only been with the commission a matter of months, spoke freely about Page when questioned by an Associated Press reporter shortly after the fight.

When asked what would have prompted the 42-year-old to enter the ring for just \$1500 that night, and whether Page's advanced age may have had anything to do with the injury, Mudd replied, "Look, your brain sits in liquid in your brain pan -- so your brain is constantly being crashed against one side of the cranium or the other during a fight. But some of these guys love boxing and they can't give it up." Mudd also spoke to representatives of other media outlets, including the Cincinnati Post and Cincinnati Enquirer, and did not appear to be laying the blame at the feet of anyone.

Nonetheless, this brought the wrath of Nancy Black, a shadowy figure who had never attended a professional fight before, and whose appointment to an administrative post as director of the Kentucky Athletic Commission was under dubious circumstances at best.

"Nancy Black called me, and honestly, I didn't even know who she was," says Mudd. "She told me, 'Well, I'm with the athletic commission, and I don't want you to talk to the press'. I told her, 'I'm going to talk to whoever I want to. This is still America.

"Then she said, 'I'm telling you right now - I don't want you talking to ANYBODY'. And I said, 'Nancy Black, fuck you'. It was as simple as that."

Shortly thereafter, Mudd was informed that he had been removed from the commission.

He wasn't altogether disappointed, considering the level of respect he had developed for his colleagues.

"They're just the biggest bunch of jerks," Mudd says. "Having them on the boxing commission is equal to having a guy refereeing a high school football game who had never been to a game before in his life."

With regard to the main culprit in the Page mess - Jack Kerns - Mudd is even more explicit. "Look, this guy never goes to a boxing gym; he only knows fighters by name, or if someone

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points it out to him. I don't know what the other boxing commissions are like, but this guy Jack Kerns is the biggest idiot that ever was."

Mudd asserts that, in terms of boxing, the other people involved with the commission were just as smart as Kerns. He uses Black as a perfect example.

"This woman had never been to a fight in her life before the Page fight, and here she was after that, in the dressing rooms, insisting that she sign on the wrapped hands," he says. "But she had never wrapped hands before. What the hell did she know? A trainer would tell her he wrapped his fighter's hands right, and she would sign off on it."

Mudd did not bad-mouth the commission in any public statements before, but he explains that it was only because "they didn't ask me the right questions."

"A guy from a local TV station (Mudd is from Louisville) came to interview me, and I was telling him before we went on the air that these people (his fellow commissioners) weren't qualified at all for their job," recounts Mudd. "But during the whole interview, this guy never bothered to ask me exactly what qualified someone to be a commissioner. I would have told him."

One thing Mudd didn't have any personal knowledge of were the events that unfolded last March 9, so he couldn't comment on the lack of oxygen at ringside. But he is among several sources who have told us that there has never been oxygen, or even a stretcher, on-site at any card the Kentucky Athletic Commission presided over before the Page-Crowe fight, even subsequent to the passage of Federal law that would require it.

"You don't have to be a rocket scientist to see what's wrong with the commission," Mudd says. "You've got a bunch of people who never had anything to do with boxing."

Mudd is a named defendant in a lawsuit filed by Page and his family this past March, since the defendants include not only the commission but each member of that commission individually; however, since he was not present at the time, it's likely he will be dropped somewhere along the way.

Not that he wouldn't want to get in a courtroom speech about Kerns, who he thinks concerned himself more with matchmaking than regulation.

"This is really a bad guy," he says. "The lowest of the low."

(Naturally, members of the Kentucky Athletic Commission could not be reached for comment)

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