

Written by Charles Jay
Monday, 10 March 2003 18:00

The 42nd Round

Maybe this is the perfect way to start things off.

Because it demonstrates clearly that given the opportunity to make any corrections at all to a situation that is, as a matter of policy, grossly negligent, the Kentucky legislature, and in particular, the Committee on Licensing, Occupations, and Administrative Regulations in the state senate, made the conscious decision not to.

The Greg Page Act, which was designed to improve safety conditions for fighters in the state, thus doing taking a step toward bringing this braindead commission into the 21st Century, died in that committee last Friday. It died of neglect, the same way, apparently, that a fighter must die before the issues addressed in a bill like this will ever get the kind of attention they deserve.

You would think the tragedy that happened to Page, the former WBA heavyweight champ, would have taught a useful lesson to people in elected positions. But it obviously did not. And a state that represents perhaps the worst that boxing has to offer has given every indication that it plans much more of the same.

Considering that the latest federal bill covering boxing is named after a world-renowned icon from the city of Louisville, it is a vulgar insult that people in Kentucky would take such a cavalier attitude toward something so critical.

Although some of our investigative efforts were used to compile background material in preparation for the formulation of this bill, I did not get an opportunity to read the proposed piece of legislation before it was introduced. Therefore, I guess I've got some good news, some bad news, and some tragic news to pass along to you.

The GOOD news is that the bill has some very useful provisions. It calls for:

- * Two physicians to be present at all professional cards, which should be national standard
- * An ambulance to be present at all times
- * A requirement (which in part existed already) that the ringside physician be licensed, not just by the commission, but by the state board of licensure, and that the license be in good standing (no suspensions or revocations on record)
- * The authority on the part of the ringside physician to direct a referee to stop a fight
- * Weigh-ins to be conducted anywhere between eight and 24 hours before a match is to take place

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- * Health insurance for all fighters in order to cover injuries suffered in a match
- * A requirement for malpractice insurance to cover injuries due to a physician's neglect
- * A requirement that all ringside physicians have training in "ringside medicine"
- * Urine tests, and tests for communicable diseases, administered to all fighters
- * A more comprehensive pre-fight physical

I wish I would indeed have gotten a chance to see this bill before it was put before the Kentucky House of Representatives, because now we have the BAD news - the bill was written in a clumsy fashion, and left some holes which would have had the effect of potentially defeating its purpose.

One of the Subsections would, in effect, prohibit anyone from filling the role of trainer and manager of the same fighter. That certainly needs to be rewritten. And weigh-ins of contestants seven days in advance of a fight are prescribed - something that would be logistically impossible to oversee or enforce.

But the most glaring oversight involves paragraphs contained within Subsections 2 & 3. In Subsection 2(b) it is ordered that fighters who suffer a TKO in the past 30 days be prohibited from fighting, and in 2(c) that those who "received a knockout or suffered serious injury in the past sixty days" be prohibited from participating as well.

That's all well and good. But Subsection 3 reads like this:

"(3) A contestant whose license is suspended or revoked in any jurisdiction or who is precluded from participating in a professional match under paragraphs (b) and (c) of Subsection (2) of this section, may participate in a professional match if the commission determines the contestant is physically and mentally fit to compete. The determination of the contestant's fitness to compete shall be made only after the contestant submits proof to the commission that he or she has undergone *a physical examination and any other medical and diagnostic procedures as the physician or the commission may require, and the results indicate there are no physical or mental reasons why the contestant should not fight.*"

The way that is written, it actually gives the Kentucky Athletic Commission the latitude to allow a fighter to compete during a suspension period imposed by any another jurisdiction, regardless of the rules of the suspending jurisdiction, so long as the fighter passes a physical and/or mental examination that meets with Kentucky standards.

First of all, that is in conflict with federal law, which requires that (1) every commission honor medical suspensions imposed by other commissions, to the letter, and (2) only the suspending commission can remove a fighter from the suspension list, this happening only after it is notified by whatever state is contemplating licensing that fighter, and satisfied that of all of its

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requirements for removal are met.

Furthermore, now that we are familiar with the level of competency of the PEOPLE involved with the Kentucky commission, it can't be anything but dangerous to leave those kinds of matters completely up to their discretion, even if no federal laws stood in the way. Do you want Nancy Black (The KAC's executive director), who has been to just a handful of boxing events in her life, and has no experience whatsoever in the sport, to be able to make a judgment as to whether a fighter who has been knocked OUT can fight, say, twenty days later? Do that and you're just inviting another tragedy to happen.

That clause would have been enough for somebody to raise a legitimate objection to this bill. I must say that in all fairness, even though I would love to see some of the safety standards be implemented.

However, nobody to seemed to catch that glitch. And that leads us to the TRAGIC news - the REAL objection to this bill had nothing to do with the way it was worded, who introduced it, or who it is named after.

No, the objection lodged by the promoters, the Kentucky Athletic Commission, and even some of the politicians, was that it was TOO EXPENSIVE to require an ambulance at a boxing show; that it was TOO EXPENSIVE to require two physicians to be at a show - one to administer to injured fighters in the dressing room and the other to preside over the fights; that it was TOO EXPENSIVE to require the additional medical tests. It just goes to show you that jerkoffs are jerkoffs, and they will never learn, even if you brought in Spongebob Squarepants to explain it to them in the language of a three-year-old.

Is it true what they say about in-breeding?.....

One of those people who will never learn, apparently, is one James Doolin, the former trainer for Greg Page, who was the first one who complained to the commission about the lack of a stretcher or oxygen equipment on the night of the fateful Page-Dale Crowe fight. Doolin is an opponent of the safety enhancements put forward in the Greg Page Act. All of a sudden a safer atmosphere is too expensive for him. Why? Because now Doolin's working for some asshole promoter in Louisville, that's why.

Needless to say, his testimony won't be worth much in Page's lawsuit against the Kentucky commissioners.

Meanwhile, State Senator Gary Tapp, who chairs this Committee on Licensing, Occupations, and Administrative Regulations, suggested that the proponents and opponents of this bill get together and "work out a compromise" in time for next January, which is the earliest these safety measures can be proposed again.

Let me give you a compromise that's perfectly appropriate.

Sure we'll wait until January.

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But let's ban professional boxing in Kentucky in the meantime.

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