

The WBC on Rocky Road Less Traveled

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With the possibility of the World Boxing Council closing their doors in the near future, many in the boxing world are looking at Graciano "Rocky" Rocchigiani as the bad guy. He isn't.

Rocchigiani was wronged by the WBC and had the guts to stand up to them. He won his case in a court of law. It was the WBC's actions which put them in the precarious position they now find themselves in, not Rocchigiani's. It was sheer arrogance on their part to believe they could strip Rocchigiani of a world title he had earned, and they had sanctioned, and give it back to Roy Jones Jr., who had earlier vacated it.

It doesn't matter who the better boxer is or whether Jones would have won the fight had they been pitted against each other at that time. There's a right way and a wrong way of doing things. An organisation like the WBC has rules it expects others to follow them. If it's to have any integrity, it needs to be seen upholding and following those rules as well. Obviously, with the WBC being the most "respected" and arguably most revered sanctioning boxing body in the world, it could be a tremendous blow to the sport to lose the WBC, but it could also be the shake up boxing needs in order to get its house in order.

You can bet Rocchigiani was not the first or last to have a grievance with the WBC. He was merely the first to solidly put his foot down. Prior to the court decision in his favour, it was felt there are certain groups, organisations or individuals who are untouchable. That impression is changing. We've all heard of atrocities and controversies where boxers have been wronged, not necessarily in WBC fights, but virtually every sanctioning body has had its blips on the radar screen. The response has usually been; "Well that's boxing. You win some you lose some."

Times are a changing. Accountability is a word being used more and more and boxing is in its firing line. Other world title sanctioning bodies need also be attentive. If the WBC can be held liable for its actions, so can the rest. I have no doubt that the WBC can ride this storm out, even if they merely reinvent themselves. Or if Rocchigiani is given a realistic offer, based on the 31 million dollar court ruling, he would no doubt consider it.

One thing Rocchigiani does need to be given in any event is respect. The WBC needs to acknowledge that he was their champion and that they wronged him. Irrespective of his motives, Rocchigiani also deserves respect for standing up to be counted. Those who control boxing need to realize that the boxers are the ones who matter most, not the promoters, managers or sanctioning bodies.

While the initial reaction may be to view the fall of the WBC as harmful to boxing, it may well be the impetus needed to restore boxing to its former glory.